

## **Preface – How Rhodes Obtained This Collection**

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### **EYEWITNESS ACCOUNTS PROVE RIVETING**

*By Leanne Kleinmann*

In 1968, Professor Michael P. Johnson at LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis asked students who marched in support of the striking Memphis sanitation workers to write about their experience. Today, Rhodes students are ensuring that these riveting slivers of history become available to the public.

The nearly 100 rare, handwritten eyewitness accounts from the event made their way to Rhodes through what Dr. Charles Hughes, director of the Memphis Center, describes as a bit of serendipity. Rhodes board of trustees chair Cary Fowler '71 was in town for a board meeting and stopped to sit in on a history class.

“He visited my History of Memphis class,” recalls Hughes, “where we were talking about the roots of the civil rights movement in the 40s and 50s, and in Memphis, the end of the Crump regime.”

Fowler, who is world-famous for his leadership in preserving global crop diversity and the construction of the Svalbard Global Seed Vault in Norway, was active in the Memphis civil rights movement. In fact, he had participated in the March 28, 1968, march that became the subject of the LeMoyne-Owen student accounts, and had been given a copy of them by Johnson.

“I kept them all these years,” says Fowler, “and began to notice that they were never referenced in books about the sanitation workers strike and this period in Memphis.” He made arrangements for Rhodes to acquire the accounts.

The accounts make for fascinating reading. This one is from “B.P.” (Johnson redacted the names when he knew the accounts would go public):

“I was in the midst of the marchers, and could not see anything in the front or back of me. We were on Main only a few minutes before we heard a noise that seem to rock the doors of Heaven. Tear gas had been thrown into crowd by the ‘police force.’ ”

“My four fellow marchers and I ran for the nearest street, and while running I remember laughing to myself because a group of policemen were out-running us trying to get to safety . . . When I got home that evening I was surprised to learn that all of my sisters and brothers had been dismissed from school because of violent outbursts, fighting and window breaking.”

“I expected everything that happened to happen. When conditions such as police brutality, a government for the white people, and discrimination at every level are brought to a head and become intolerable in the Black Community the result is not very pleasant for anyone . . . (Negroes) want their rights now and will not wait.”

Jessica Johnson '15, who was part of the Digital Preservation and Scholarship (DPS) team, read all of the LeMoyne-Owen documents, and realized what Fowler had understood: “We don’t really have documentation of what happened in the daily lives of Memphians, of African Americans.”

“Some of the accounts are very dramatic,” said Dr. Suzanne Bonefas, director of Special Projects at Rhodes, who leads the student digitization teams.

When Johnson began reading the LeMoyne documents, she had an interest in their historical value, but then she decided to bring them to life by asking friends to read and record the accounts.

From “E.W.”:

“When I got up on Thursday, March 28, 1968, I knew that there was to be a massive demonstration in downtown Memphis, but until 11, it never dawned on me that there was actually something more than just the peaceful demonstration for the striking sanitation workers.”

“At 11, my cousin called me from Carver High School pleading with me to get her out of school. She said that ‘these people have gone crazy over here and I am afraid to stay here.’ ”

“After I finished talking to my cousin, I turned my radio on and I heard that there was an outbreak of violence at Hamilton High School and that there was violence and window-breaking in the downtown area. My neighbors, by

this time, had gotten their children out of school and were in the front yard listening to the radio (WLOK and WDIA). They cheered and laughed uncontrollably as the accounts of vandalism and violence poured out of a transistor radio.”

Says Jessica Johnson, now a law student at Ole Miss: “I wanted to transcribe the stories from an old piece of paper full of illegible cursive to something everyone could see, understand, and believe. I wanted to make them come to life.”

## Original Preface to the Collection

### THE MEMPHIS “RIOT”

Some Eye-witness Accounts of Events in Memphis, March 28-April, 1968

These documents do not present a balanced picture of the Memphis “riot.” They are not supposed to be balanced. Instead, they are eye-witness accounts of what ninety-seven LeMoyné students saw, heard, and felt during the tumultuous days that occasioned Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s ill-fated return visit to the City of Good Abode. These documents give us a unique opportunity to learn what really happened during the “riot,” at least to these LeMoyné students. They represent history in its roughest form, direct and unedited statements of personal experiences. Because they are unedited, they are repetitious; because they were dittoed, many of the copies are faint; because they were hand-written they are not as clear as they might be. ALL of this means the reader is confronted with material that demands more than the usual amount of perseverance, concentration, and simple hard work. We hope it will be worth it. We hope that after you read these documents you will be able to answer many questions. For example:

Why did violence erupt at the scene of the march? Were black militants wholly responsible? Was police protection adequate, before the window-breaking? Was the march properly disciplined? What was the influence of the incidents at Hamilton High School. Did the news media contribute to the tension or merely observe it? Were the looters seeking revenge against “the man” or were they simply interested in stealing? Did the police exercise the restraint Frank Holloman has praised them for? Was the widespread property damage organized by conspirators or was it random and spontaneous? Was it the result of a “moral holiday,” precipitated by looting at the march, or was it redistribution for the actions of police? How was the curfew enforced? What were the attitudes of police and National Guardsman as reflected in their actions and language? And of course these are not the only questions to which we hope you will find here.

Many people helped contribute to this publication. The students in History 202 and 304 did the most important work—they wrote it. The College has generously consented to underwrite the cost of making copies of the documents. We are grateful to Upward Bound for the use of their electric ditto machine.

Note to the Reader:

1. Page numbers are circles in the lower right corner of each page.
2. The initials of the writer are at the top right of each page.
3. All names in these accounts are fictitious.

Michael P. Johnson

Memphis, Tenn.

May 14, 1968

R.C. - 1

The incident at Hamilton High School began around 8:30 AM when students of Hamilton go there for the outside of the school. The only trouble was that most of the students were talking rather loud. Then as a bus was arriving some of the students surrounded the bus and forced their way onto the bus. This would have been prevented if the N.A.A.C.P. workers had sent a representative to advise the students of the best way of preceding downtown to join the march. After this the students became rather impatient and were blocking the streets. The students began bricking garage trucks, police cars and a laundry truck. They also kicked and dented a white lady's car as she continued to blow her horn for the students to clear the street.

Police cars began to arrive and a helicopter appeared circling the school overhead. The students quieted down a lot. Then another bus came down Wilson and four more police cars arrived.

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R.C. - 2

The officers in these cars jumped out suddenly with nightsticks and shotguns in their hands and charging toward the students who were fleeing toward the buildings. One girl was hurt. Police and newspapers stated that she was hit by an object someone threw. Students stated that she was hit by an object thrown by an officer. The officers also claimed that they did not use their nightsticks but they were swinging at the running students and could not prevent hitting them. Students began throwing bricks, bottles, and sticks after they were being hit by the policemen. When the girl was being taken away to the hospital the students ceased fighting but the police made another charge at the students and they started back again.

People watching began talking and telling the police that they should not hit the students and to leave them alone. The police then started forcing the people

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R.C. - 3

Off the corner and one man was arrested for merely protesting the action of the police and for being slow to move on. Around 9:30 the students settled down and proceeded to march downtown to join the march.

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V.C. - 1

Violence at Hamilton High

Lucille Watson is a fictitious name of a student at Hamilton High School, who witnessed the riot that occurred at Hamilton on the day of the March downtown for the sanitation strikers. Miss Watson is a sophomore at Hamilton and for reasons prefer that her name be anonymous or fictitious. Miss Watson gave me a detailed account on the happenings that occurred at Hamilton.

This is the interview as it was told: The date was March 28, 1968. The time was about 9:00 A.M.

Interview Begins:

Miss Watson: I went to school that day to finish my test, but before I could walk into my homeroom, Sondra, Nancy. And some more of my friends told me to fool Mrs. Wilson into believing that we weren't coming to school to stay, but to return home or go to Clayborn Temple to join in the March for the sanitation workers.

Question: Did you immediately leave the school to go home or march?

Miss Watson: We went outside on the campus and we saw a majority of Hamilton students out on the side of the building facing Kerr Street.

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V.C. - 2

Question: what did you and your friends do?

Miss Watson: We decided to join them. On the other side of the street, I saw three adults, whole I believe were ministers. They were telling the students not to go to school but to return home or come to Clayborn Temple to join the march.

Question: Did you all follow their advice?

Miss Watson: Everyone was in a panic, we didn't know what to do because we had planned to finish our tests.

Question: What else happened?

Miss Watson: There were three men and a group of other kids from other areas of the city were steadily arguing with us. We didn't want them to think that we didn't care about the Negro sanitation workers, so some of our students join them. A few minutes later the city bus appeared and the kids forced the bus driver to open the door and he did, so they got on the bus without paying a cent.

Question: What happened after that?

Miss Watson: After the bus left, we saw those garbage trucks coming up Kerr toward us. We started yelling, throwing rocks and anything that we could get our hands on.

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V.C. - 3

These trucks were guarded by the policemen. About fifteen minutes after, we heard the sirens of the police cars coming to Hamilton.

Question: What did the police do?

Miss Watson: The policemen had the schools blocked in every direction so nobody could come in or out. I was very surprised and afraid too because our assistant principal had locked the side doors where the majority of the Hamilton students were.

Question: About how many policemen were there?

Miss Watson: 20 policemen or more, there appearance didn't excite some students at all because they were determined to cause violence. All od [sic] the policemen got in a straight line with their black jacks and tear gasses and our students got together and started throwing rocks, bricks, sticks and some of anything at the policemen.

Question: What did the police do then?

Miss Watson: This caused the policemen to run and beat us if they could catch us. They were hitting girls as well as boys. When the policemen started running after us and using their black jacks and tear gasses I (illegible) to get in the building where I felt safe.

Question: What was happening between students and the police?

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V.C. - 4

Miss Watson: This didn't stop the students nor the policemen, because they like beating, kicking and knocking you down on the ground like you were dogs or something. The teachers were so afraid that they locked up their doors. The running was plenty of exercise for the policemen, because you can believe me, they did plenty of that. One while we all had ranks and we lined up and went toward the policemen; we made them run for a change.

Question: Were there any injuries or arrests?

Miss Watson: Two persons were hurt and one arrested. This really made us angry. When we saw these people who got hurt. This action happened fast, the policemen were running all over our campus and on other people's property and shoving older people around. They sprayed some tear gas in one boy's eyes and he couldn't hardly see. Some boys brought him inside put some water in his eyes. At 10:00 the riot had quieted down. The policemen were still there but they couldn't stop us from forming a group to march downtown, so a large group of students left school to march.

## Comments

This is a detailed account of what happened at Hamilton school but it is the account of the riot by just one person – there are of course other (illegible) accounts also, but Miss Watson gave a very thorough account of what actually happened.

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V.C. – 5

## Comments

The trouble that occurred at Hamilton is related to the trouble that occurred, when Dr. King led the marches downtown. From the information that is gathered from Miss Watson, the trouble started when kids from other areas of the city came to Hamilton and started an argument with the students because they weren't participating in march downtown and it is my belief that the Hamilton students started throwing things at the garbage men and policemen because they were trying to prove that they were for the garbage workers, just by the use of violence.

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J.H. – 1

### “The Riot in Memphis”

On March 26, a number of incidents took place that set off a somewhat chain reaction. The first link in the incidents was the walk out of high school students at Hamilton High School.

One of the students at Hamilton was asked what caused it, or the walk out of class, and he said that, “It all began when garbage trucks [sic] passed by the schools and the student stood in front of them and hurled rocks at the trucks causing the assistant principal to call the police in. When the police were called in this caused the student to rebel [sic] more. The incident ended with one student injured seriously and a few other injured along with one of the officers injured.”

The second link in the incidents was a mass meeting of Negro leaders and then supporters at Clayborn Temple in an attempt to march down Main, so as to help the Negro to gain justice and equality, but in this attempt violence broke out as the middle of the march approached Beale and Main. One of the participants in the march was hit in the head with a club by an officer causing several of the marchers to go into battle with the officers. This caused more and more officers and marchers to become involved and the Negroes began to run down main smashing windows as they passed. The smashing of windows and looting was done mostly by high school students and or students of that age, about five hundred of the marchers out of an approximate twenty thousand or more participated in the looting.

The third and final link was the calling of the National Guard, and the Mayor putting a curfew on the citizens of Memphis or the Negroes of Memphis. The curfew was lifted April 1, and everything went on as usual. There is still tension, but everything remains quiet.

John Holloway

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E.W. – 1

## MEMPHIS RIOT OF 1968

When I got up on Thursday, March 28, 1968, I knew that there was to be a massive demonstration in downtown, Memphis, but until 11:00 o'clock, it never dawned on me that there was actually something more than just the peaceful demonstration for the striking sanitation workers.

At eleven o'clock, my cousin called me from Carver high school pleading with me to get her out of school. She said that “these people have gone crazy over here and I am afraid to stay here. There are some boys standing across the street, but I don't know if they are trouble makers or not but a lot of students have left with their parents already and I can't get in touch with X my mother.” At 12:00 noon, the principal, no longer able to stop students from leaving after continued pleas over the intercoms, dismissed school. The police had been called out but were not able to stop fleeing students.

After I finished talking to my cousin, who is a high school senior, I turned my radio on and I heard that their [sic] was

an outbreak of violence at Hamilton high school and that their [sic] was an outbreak of violence and window breaking in the downtown area. My neighbors, by this time, had gotten their children out of school and were in the frontyard [sic] listening to the radio (WLOK and WDIA). They cheered and laughed uncontrollable as the accounts of vandalism and violence poured out of a transistor radio.

Rumors spread like wildfire by both the news media and observers. At five o'clock, on channel 5, the news reporter said that a sixteen year old youth had been shot and killed while robbing a service station as he pulled a butcher knife on police officers who tried to arrest him. On

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E.W. – 2

The April 2, 1968 news, channel 5 said that this same youth was shot while stealing a TV set and that he was armed with a knife. This and other false accounts places doubt on the information of the news media on the local level.

Later that evening, I went to a neighborhood store and I heard a Negro store owner denouncing the youths who reportedly invaded a nearby elementary school. He said that they should have been shot down (invaders). Two hours after he closed his store, I saw a fire truck extinguishing a small fire on the ground around the store. There was no damage to the store but a telephone post was burned.

Fire trucks and police ran through my neighborhood all night long.

One man said that he was approached Friday, after the riot, by a man who offered him a color TV set and a leather coat cheap.

A participant in the march said that the police triggered violence around the area where he (she) was when they brutally forced an old woman back into the crowd with a club, nearly striking a infant in her arms.

This riot was not a surprise to me because I had been informed (by some strange character who called himself soul brother) that there would be a riot and this was two ewwks before the riot occurred. It really didn't take someone telling me, though, for me to guess that there would be one. Personally I wondered why Memphis had not had one sooner. Many persons became bitter and frustrated when Mayor Loeb won the election for Mayor. Many felt that his being elected was a white backlash. The day of the riot, I heard a woman (about 60 years old) crying and upset because Loeb was not killed, say that if she could have just 2 minutes with him she would strangle him, bit her terms were not as mildly stated as I have paraphrased here.

I feel that this riot will promote change or if it dose [sic] not many youth will die in the street. Many youths are afraid of being drafted and are

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E.W. – 3

Tired of being discriminated against in job opportunities. In short, they do not care weather [sic] they die here or in Vietnam-either way they will die a useless death.

Dr. Martin L. King said, on a TV interview concerning the Near riot, that he did not know that Memphis had within the Negro community elements that might trigger such disturbances. These elements grew each summer when youths sat in Job Corps centers or employment offices and were denied the same opportunities for jobs as whites. The old lie about being qualified in cases where Negro youths were involved was an obvious fraud.

These elements grew each time a youth was beaten or shot to death, sencelessly [sic], by sadistic policemen (white and Black) who had a license to kill Black people.

These elements grew as youths were left idle with no recreational facilities each summer.

These elements exploded when Henry Loeb entered office. His lack of response to end the sanitation strike, through reasonable settlements, lit the awaiting fuse of the frustrated youth and community.

R.H. – 1

Ronald Hooks

History 304

## Dr. King's March on Memphis

On Thursday March 28, 1968 a mass march was held in Memphis, Tenn. In support of the striking sanitation workers. Dr. Martin Luther King had been in town earlier and had called for a general work stoppage on the day of the march. He urged all Negroes and whites in support of the strike should stay off from work in support of the striking workers. The march had been originally scheduled for the previous Friday but had been cancelled because of a snowstorm.

On the day of the march this writer boarded a bus headed downtown to the march. Hamilton high school happens to be on the bus route and what this writer observed at the school happens to be on the bus route and what this writer observed at the school turned out to be only an indication of what would happen later on in the day.

There was a sizable group of students outside the school but at this particular time this writer observed no significant incidents of disorder among the students. When the bus came to a halt at the bus stop two girls attempted to board the bus. As they were loading a voice from outside the bus shouted "Hey don't ride we're all marching down." The girls then turned around and got off the bus. As the bus started off again there were between ten to fifteen patrol cars on the scene and they were blocking off and detouring traffic heading back toward the school. The bus proceeded to the location of the march without further incident.

Within two blocks of the location of the march traffic began to (illegible) and this writer left the bus and walked the rest of the route to the starting point of the march.

It was about 9:15 A.M. when I reached the starting point of

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R.H. - 2

the march. I went to pick up a camera from my uncle's studio which is not quite two blocks away from the point where the march was scheduled to start.

From about 9:30 to 10:30 I busied myself by taking candid shots of the crowd. Everyone seemed to be in a gay mood. During this time the organizers [sic] of the march were constantly telling those people standing on the sidewalks and milling around in the front of the marchers to fall in line behind the organized marchers. The leaders of the march never accomplished this goal for even after the beginning of the march there were those on the sidelines and in front of even the leaders. This fact gave the impression that the entire march was out of order which was not the case. This writer is not an experienced crowd estimator but it is my opinion and the opinion of those witnesses I have interviewed that the size of the crowd far exceeded the five or six thousand given in the papers. One reporter I asked gave an estimate ten to fifteen thousand people however I have yet to see this estimate in the papers.

Dr. King arrived at approximately 10:45. It was at this point that there was a good indication that events would not proceed as well as planned. The people who had been milling around swarmed around Dr. King's car and it was a good ten minutes before Dr. King was able to get out of the car. When he finally did get out of the car he never was able to get ahead of those two or three hundred marchers who refused to fall into the ranks of the crowd.

As the march turned on Beale I ran to get in front of Dr. King in order to take some pictures of the leaders of the march. About a block and a half up Beale street I heard the first window break. It is impossible at this time for anyone to give an overall picture of what happened because so much was happening at once that one could

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R.H. - 3

Only observe a small portion of what was happening. People were trying to walk such too fast for a crowd of that size. Dr. King was being pushed and people were walking on each other's heels. This fact only added to the confusion that was rapidly building up. As they proceeded up Beale St. windows continued to break in rapid succession. I was later told that this was when most of the looting was done. I was later told that this was when most of the looting was done. As I try to remember back on the march a factor of which I did not pay much attention to was the absence of police from the starting point of the march and even on Beale Street.

As the procession turned onto Main Street I sought to stay ahead of the march. The sound of windows breaking could still be heard. It is a rather short block from the corner of Beale and Main to where Main is intersected by McCall Street. By the time the march reached McCall a group of the parade marshalls formed a line across Main St. to stop the march. At this time I only thought it was a temporary halt in an effort to restore order. It was only after I heard Dr. Ralph Jackson telling the people that the march was over and that they should return to the church that I realized that

the "March on Memphis" had officially come to a halt.

However if the march was over much of the confusion was just beginning. I looked down Main and saw a line of policemen stretched across Main Street. Some of the policemen were wearing gas masks. As the policemen came forward mass confusion broke loose people started running, women and children were crying and those on the sidelines were continuing to break windows and loot the stores. It was at this point that, what is in my opinion, the most significant event of the whole afternoon occurred. When the windows were first broken and those few involved began looting most people in the march were saddened and disgusted at the outbreaks of violence. In only a short time span however this disgust was replaced by hate,

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R.H. - 4

Hate that in my opinion was precipitated by the acts of "Memphis Finest," the Memphis Police Department.

For as the policemen sought to push the march backwards. They turned not on the looters in particular but on the marchers and Negroes in general. They did this with such enthusiasm and with such utter disregard of justice that many people began to encourage the few who started the window breaking and began to encourage the few who started the window breaking and began to take part in the looting themselves.

As the march was pushed back to Main and Beale some marchers went down Main and others went down Beale. I was one of the ones that went down Main Street. However as I walked on I noticed a cloud of white smoke that was preceded by what resembled a shotgun blast. Immediately those people in front of me turned and started back toward me. I suddenly realized that they were running from tear gas. I did not immediately panic however as I thought that I was too far away to become affected by the gas. Three seconds later I knew I was wrong. My eyes suddenly seemed as if they were on fire. I was blinded by my own tears and I also started to run back down Beale Street. I couldn't really see where I was going. All of a sudden I felt someone grab me. I immediately turned and tensed up because I thought it was the police. As I opened my eyes wider I realized that it was the police. As I opened my eyes wider I realized that it was my father who had been taking pictures also. He wanted to know what I was running for buy before I could answer he knew for the effect of the tear gas on my eyes suddenly made his eyes start to run.

As we walked on to my uncle's studio we noticed the incidents taking place the looting and the actions for the police toward those who are not even involved.

One incident involved a Negro man who like most people were moving along as the policemen advanced. To one particular officer

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R.H. - 5

however it seems that the man was not moving fast enough. The officer took a portable can of mace and proceeded to spray it in the man's face for about a half a block. The man refused to run however and this seemed to only further anger the officer.

My father and I looked across the street and observed three of four policemen advancing on a bearded white man who had been in the protest. The man was walking backwards away from the officers. As the officers advanced however one of them reached out and clubbed the man with his riot stick. The other officers immediately joined in and also beat the man. My camera was out of film at this and I knew that I dare not stop to reload as one officer had previously tried to snatch my camera from around my neck.

When we finally reached the studio which is located on Linden near Hernando policemen were scattering people and running them in all directions. Some of them sought to refuge on the porch of the studio. My uncle was standing on the porch taking pictures. Suddenly two or three officers ran on the porch and began to push everyone off. People fled into our door. When told that this was out place of business one officer replied "Well get the hell inside then." As we went inside one officer made a remark that they should take our cameras however we closed the door and they went away. Throughout the day we could see across the street and see people throwing bricks and bottles and police officers giving chase. I went to the darkroom to develop the film in the cameras. At that time the darkroom was probably the quietest and the safest place in town. Indeed it had been a long day.

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T.S. - 1

Thursday morning my wife went to Hamilton for her practice teaching and was on the scene when the outbreak of trouble started in Memphis. Teacher was alerted to move their car from the school. She got hers and came home, then I carried her back to the school. When we got back to the school kid was throwing bricks and stone at car. The police was there, but couldn't handle all the kids until reinforcement come. During the outbreak a kid got hit in head with a stick and was taken in the school for first aid. She had blood running down her face, it was later reported that is was minor. Later reports reach downtown that a kid had been killed at Hamilton by the police. I left the school and headed for Clayborn Temple where Dr. King was to lead a march down town. The march was to leave the church at ten o'clock. It was late leaving the church because of bad weather. This delayed the march until about eleven o'clock. Tension build up because of reports that the police had killed a girl at Hamilton school. I stood around talking to friends around 45 minutes when Dr. King arrive with 3 body guard. He was escorted by Jerry Fanion of the Shelby County Human Relationship Committee. He refuse to enter the march because of the crowd. The people was trying to get a look at him and this he didn't like. He was (illegible) by Rev Lawson and he took up his position as the leaders of the march. As the march turned up Beale I saw the liquor store get looted. When the march turned up Main Street the police form a blockage and forced the crowd to turn around. The beat women and children and

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T.S. – 2

I watched Dr. King leave the march, he asked the driver of the (illegible) truck to take him away, but he refused, then he got into a private car, the driver took him back to Clayborn Temple. As he was leaving a policeman broke the windshield of the car on the driver side. I left and went to my car which was parked at Danny Thomas and (illegible). When I got there people was standing around talking about what had happen. The police came and beat more people for no reasons. I left and went to my mother in law home where Wallace Callahan was waiting for me. He told how he had saw police beat people for little or no reason. As I was on my way home I saw the owner of Big Star Super Market shoot a Negro boy running down the street. A kid had thrown a brick through the window and he shot the first one he saw. This built up tension in North Memphis because rumors were spread that the boy was killed by a white man. The report was false but the boy was hurt badly. The people of North Memphis started one of the largest false reports in Memphis. They the police had killed 3 Negro boys and the store owner had killed a Negro boy also. There was lots of looting and (illegible) Memphis. The was large reports of police beating people for no reason at all also.

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M.A. – 1

### The Riot At Hamilton High School

The incident at Hamilton was pretty bad as Natalie Goodland, age 15, saw it. She said that the incident occurred when a group of sanitation workers came to the school that morning to pick up garage. The students threatred the sanitation workers by telling them that if they picked up the garage, they were going to be sorry afterwards. The sanitation workers didn't (illegible), but went on to do their job, despite the warning that the students gave. As a result, these students carried out their warnings, and tried to beat the workers up. Naturally, she said, the police came to the workers aid almost immediately. When the other students saw what was happening, they began to run out of the building throwing socks and bricks at the police, and the police reacted to this by shooting tear gas all over the place. This particular student

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M.A. – 2

Replied that that it was just awful, and the only way that she could get home was to call her mother to come after her, and then she had to meet her on the next street. Incidentally, she made her get away by running to the house nearby.

In addition to that, a well known Baptist minister, who I will refer to as Rev. Campbell, said that he had to go to Hamilton at the time of the riot to pull his daughter out of the school. He said that the principal and teachers seemed rather calm to him, and they told him that if he wanted to get his daughter, he would have to wait in a long line. Rev. Campbell told them, and I quote, "I didn't have to stand in a line when she came into their world, and I utterly refuse to stand in any line now." So, he went to his daughter's homeroom and rescued her.

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R.S. – 1

### Violence at Hamilton School

I did not see any of the action that took place at Hamilton but I was able to interview a junior that attended the school. The following statement will be those spoken by my friend.

“When we got off the bus and began walking toward the school entrance, we noticed a few men who were supposedly ministers standing in front of the door. They were shouting “children don’t come to school, go down town and march, support the striking sanitation workers.” By this time over one hundred students had gathered near the door. About ten minutes later a garbage convoy passed slowly by Hamilton escorted by a couple of police cars. The children began throwing rocks at the garbage truck. One of the policemen would see that they were in for trouble so he radioed for help. Within thirty minutes about twenty squad cars with four policemen per car arrived on the scene.

Things were not half as bad as the policemen made it look. This is what really excited the students. The policemen jumped out of their cars and made a straight line in front of the school. They were tear gas masks and were around with billy clubs and tear gas.

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R.S. – 2

Just to have a little fun, the students decided to play a game of “cat and mouse.” They began to run from one end of the campus to the other. With this action the policeman charged into the students swinging their “billy clubs” and putting gas on everybody. They were not looking for an particular person to hit, they only swung with full force, at anything that looked human. One policeman hit a friend of mine so hard until it knocked her down. And they also began beating one boy in the head and across his back. This action taken by the police was what actually started the Memphis riot.

Hamilton students (an estimated 200) marched down town and spreaded the word to the marchers that policemen were at Hamilton beating children. After getting this news the younger boys began breaking store windows.

### My Personal Response

From what I’ve read and heard, it seems as through every visit throughout the U.S.A. was erupted by some illegal, inhuman act performed by the police department. The government in all of the cities of America are trying to find a situation that will stop city riots.

23

R.S. – 3

For example, 1. they have invested “mace,” a new form of gas, 2. They are giving their police officers special riot training, 3. And they are increasing the jail sentence for those who are guilty of rioting. “This is definitely not the answer.”

Answer: Let every American city do a thorough investigation of their police force. Let them get rid of those policemen who are blind with race hatred. Teach them, not how to (illegible) and use mace, but how to love one another regardless of race, creed, or color; teach them that all men are created equal, and above all teach them that commandment which states “Thou Shall Not Kill.”

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JJ. – 1

### The Memphis Riot

On March 28, 1968, an exceedingly warm and sun shining day, Martin Luther King, arrived at Clayborn Temple on Hernando at 11:15 A.M. (W.D.I.A. News), for the purpose of the march scheduled in (illegible) of the sanitation workers.

There was an estimated crowd of 1500 people gathered for the march. The crowd proceeded from the church in a somewhat orderly but noisy manner. Mixed in the crowd, was those(illegible) to possibly 60, as well as the mixing of the races. As the crowd marched right off of Hernando to Beale (illegible).

I realized that the triggering off of the riot was not from their gathering for the purpose of the march, but (illegible) organized for the disturbance of mankind. Their

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JJ. - 2

purpose are to intermingle with the crowd in order to make it less obvious of the organizations there. They began by breaking shop windows and looting all they could, between Hernando and main.

The police immediately began taking drastic measures in rendering a quick solution to the disturbance. Such objects as blackjacks, slapsticks, rifles and mace were used to break the crowd up. The police fired in the air, in order to frighten the looters, they (illegible) of the marches, many who were totally innocent in the (illegible) of the riot. One of the bullets hit a 16 year old, Larry Payne in the stomach. The story as told by his 17 year old girlfriend, who was present at the march, to a friend of mine, was Larry (illegible), and when the sound of windows shattering (illegible) ran in that direction. He had a T.V. in his hands, and when the officer asked him to put it down, he did, but was immediately shot in the stomach. I couldn't believe what I had seen, but it had happened.

26

JJ. - 3

With our attention placed once again on the march, Martin L. King who escorted by other leaders of the march to safety. Meanwhile the policemen (illegible), were working toward clearing the streets and arresting the looters and the trouble makers. It was an event which will linger in the minds of those who were there because such inhuman brutality on the part of the police officers were displaced, unnecessary beating that wasn't printed on even my the press, the vulgar name calling, and the (illegible) officers that were hurt. It was estimated as to about (illegible) injured. But reports from John Gaston Hospital were different. My aunt, Mrs. Randle, age 32, a practical nurse on the day shift, reported that a (illegible) number of police officers were being treated and a few admitted, a number that expected (illegible).

There also were reports from Detroit and (illegible) that (illegible) twisted the press (illegible) the actual news. Mrs. Taylor, age 24, a teacher in Detroit, called her mother, Mrs. Leland, age 42, a neighbor of mine and,

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JJ. - 4

Stated that the paper there had printed that 300 had participated in the march and (illegible), and that no one was injured, and not much damage was administered to the Downtown section onto Beale. The Milwaukee News, as quoted by Miss (illegible), and the daughter of Mrs. Leland, who is also a teacher, age 26, states: news reached her that Memphis had a little disturbance, not much denial of it, but news got around that a riot was to be underway. A few windows were broken and there were no injuries. After about an hour, the crowd had dispersed and all was quiet once again.

As to my personal reactions, I feel that the riot was necessary, in that the Sanitation workers have been protesting and marching for (illegible) days, and still nothing has come of it with disturbances of this sort, it does give the white citizens of Memphis the idea that we as negro citizens, has taken about all we intend to. Some peaceful agreement will have to be decided on, as strikes of this sort (riots) will always be a part

JJ. - 5

of Memphis. Maybe something will be done in the future to better the situations here that are taking place. Until then, I say, "Riot Baby, Riot!!"

29

M.H. - 1

That Was the Day That Was!

Memphis was in an uproar; but how did it get that way? I had waited a long time for this day to come, but now that it was here I wasn't sure that I wanted it. I witnessed many things that have already been explained or justified. All I will do is tell the things I saw and did.

I saw the mass of marchers advancing up Beale toward Main. I wanted to be with them. I advanced down Beale and

Third and there I joined the marchers. I saw mostly high school students surrounding me. A lot of the boys I saw had a stick or a club in his hand. Others were carrying signs. I wasn't expecting any violence as I didn't realize then what the sticks were for.

There wasn't much order in the march. When the crowd reached Pape's Men Store I discovered what the sticks were for.

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M.H. - 2

The window crashed and the march continued on. I saw fellows entering the store carrying out goods. The looting had begun.

I was walking about two feet away from Martin Luther King when we got on Main. The Crowd had gone wild. Mr. King and a group of ministers left the march down a side street. I thought it best for me to follow. We walked about the same pace we had been going. The ministers put Mr. King into a white car on Front Street and drove off. By this time police had us surrounded from all angles. The policemen had their guns drawn and gas mask [sic] on. They ordered "all of you...to get back on main." We were pushed by some of the policemen, so immediately we got back on Main.

On Main I saw more windows being broken. People were running and others walking others with loud speakers were telling the crowd to go back to Clayborn Temple. This is what the majority of the people did. On my way back to Clayborn Temple, I heard bullets firing and more windows

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M.H. - 3

being broken. I also saw fellows on the street drinking liquor that was stolen from the package store.

Back at Clayborn Temple fellows were trying to sell some of the things they had stolen. Over the loud speaker at Clayborn Temple, Rev. Middlebrook asked the people to come inside and take seats. When I left the church, most of the people were standing all around the building and in the street. I left there on my way home.

On my way home, I saw teenagers drinking more liquor and police cars speeding through the streets. I saw two teenagers on Vance Ave. stop and beat up a white taxi cab driver. A police car was nearby, but drove right by this accident. I passed by Porter Jr. High School and saw parents taking their children home.

I made it home, and about 5 or 6 o'clock that evening I saw army truck passing by. All night long I heard the sound of sirens, and heavy trucks.

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M.H. - 4

A personal friend and I was [sic] affected by the curfew hour Loeb put into action. We wanted to go out that night but couldn't. We wrote the following short poem to express how we felt.

Blue Skies, Moon Light

I've got to get out of this house tonight. I was planning on going on a date, but because of what is happening here I'm stuck. If Loeb wasn't such a big coward I wouldn't be here because of this curfew hour.

Blue Skies, Moon Light

Loeb let me out of my house tonight!

33

E.J. - 1

The Memphis March

On Thursday, March 28, 1968, there was a march held in Memphis. It was led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. The march was in sympathy with the two month old strike of the sanitation workers. This group of nearly 8,000 was sup-

posed to have been a non-violent one but it later erupted in violence and several people were injured.

The march had its beginning at Clayborn Temple (illegible) Church and was delayed for some time because of the late arrival of Dr. Martin King Jr. As the march proceeded down Beale Street, a small group of about 250 Negroes, mostly teenagers, broke off from the main group of marchers and started looting and breaking out windows of stores. This act brought in the policemen, who in my opinion could have handled the situation with less brutality.

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E.J. – 2

The marchers, after this incident were forced to turn around and head back in the opposite direction off to the Temple and go home. Even after this happened the looting continued in some places.

The violence which broke out brought some 5,000 National Guardsmen into the city. They will remain here until some of the racial tensions have cooled down.

Even though the strike is not settled I think the march has accomplished a great deal. It showed that the Negro community is for race, together and they are not willing to sit by any longer and let things continue as they are now. They are determined to get equal employment opportunities, better housing and higher wages and we will.

35

M.A. – 1

Memphis Tennessee, March 28th, 1968

The trouble here could have been called a disturbance or wild and turbulent conduct. But it was termed a “risk” and “general guerilla warfare.” Were these terms justified? I can’t say (for I wasn’t there. Nevertheless here are two [sic] reports one gathered from our local news media the other is from an eye witness. Both we attempt to tell what happened here in Memphis on March 28th, 1968.

“Violence exploded in the streets of Memphis today. It was caused by a small member of Negro Youths who began tossing rocks through windows and break-

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M.A. – 2

ing the glass with clubs some would run into the store window grab merchandise and flee. Liquor stores were their favorite targets. The Memphis police department using nightsticks and mace quickly restored order. However, resistance was given in the (illegible) a flying brick and occasional gunfire.” “As (illegible) might fall on the city it finds its self [sic] with its first curfew in modern times. “

This is Ellis’s report as to what happened. “The crowd was tense but there was a cheerful atmosphere. To be honest everybody was more interested in the signs and hearing and seeing Doctor King than any thing [sic] else. There were a few shots of black power and I believe someone even jokingly mentioned a riot. None of this was really taken seriously by any of us.

M.A. – 3

We were near (illegible) when the marchers in the front started to back (illegible) running. There was so much confusion and naturally I was only thinking of getting out of there. I heard glass crumbling and people shouting. We took off for Front Street we went on down to Riverdale. It wasn’t easy getting through that mob. The police were hitting and spraying (with mace) everyone in reach. Well anyway I finally got back to the Temple. At first we got all kinds of reports. From which I (we, the ministers at the temple) could gather the trouble was started by some bystanders after they broke the glass windows the people began looting the stores.

What really happened? That (illegible)

M.A. – 4

“modern day” curfew. Beale Street will go down in history for something more than jazz. 4000 National Guardsmen were called to the city. 150 fires were reported on that night. Bands [sic] were put on the sale of gasoline (in a can) ammunition and fire arms and alcoholic beverages. Memphis had no local bus service for approximately 12 hours. All

of these were first in "Modern Way Memphis. It also provided a clearer view of the riot problem in Memphis and the "rebellious youth" of this city"

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R.W. – 1

### On The Memphis Riot

The following is an account of the riot which occurred here in Memphis on Thursday ;ast. March 28. 1968. This account was forwarded to me by a Le Moyne College student who was on the scene and took an active part in what went on.

The person from whom I received this information seems to think that the violence which erupted from what was to have been a peaceful march was pre-planned. He, this student, had been informed of the plans. The march was late getting started. This delay was due to the late arrival of Dr. Martin Luther King. Dr. King, who was to have led the march, did not arrive to the point at which the march was scheduled to have begun until after 11:00 a.m. The march was scheduled to have begun at 9:30 a.m. By the time Dr. King arrived, the marchers, many of whom were radical young high school and college students were impatient and restless. When Dr. King arrived he met an unruly mob rather than an organized group of peaceful marchers.

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R.W. – 2

By this time, as it was reported on the news, the march had been taken over by the militants.

I was told that an organized group of these so-called radicals had planned for the violence to start when the march reached the corner of Main and Madison. This plan was organized such that the window smashing and looting and fire bomb throwing would wreck the establishments of the city's most noted merchants, including Jack Goldsmith and Julius (illegible). If this plan had been carried out, the radicals believe that pragmatism of the elite white society would at length make Mayor Loeb yield in his senseless stand on the issue. But as it were, the young unorganized hot-heads largely the high school folk, tore up Beale Street. This act, to a large degree, killed the purpose of the riot. "Mayor Loeb," I was told, "does not give a damn what happens to those Jews on Beale."

The young men to whom I spoke seemed to be of the opinion that the Memphis Police Department did a commendable job of putting down the riot. He thought that even though one Negro youth was killed unnecessarily that the police used a great deal of restraint. Considering that they not only dealt with looters, window smashers, and fire-bomb throwers, but were often the targets of

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R.W. – 3

The person with whom I spoke thinks that if people who charged them, the police, with overreacting had been in the position of the policeman, they'd not have reacted as effectively.

I was told that the riots imperiled the establishments of non-Negro merchants all over the city. He related an incident of a Chinese grocer in the North Memphis Negro community who was concerned about saving his store from damages. I was told that the grocers' children go to school with Negroes. The Negroes had told those kids that if the words "Soul Brother" had been written on the windows of any establishment, the establishment would be passed over by the firebombers and looters, as had been done in the Detroit riots. The Chinese, not completely understanding, instead wrote upon the window the words "Me Nigger" and his store was turned Thursday night and its remains were burned Friday night.

42

D.C. – 1

### THE SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE SANITATION STRIKE

The more than 1,000 striking sanitation workers have been sitting along the sidelines six or seven weeks watching the big battle that is being waged in their behalf. They are seeing things that they never witnessed before -- boycotts, marchers, protests rallies and other implications that go to make up a power battle.

The boycott on downtown stores is paying off. Hundreds of people have stopped taking the two daily papers. Some neighborhood grocery stores are being boycotted and this has brought a loud cry from Chinese grocers; this incident is being pointed out to them that they are guilty as whites when it comes to calling Negroes by their first names.

Thanks to Roy Wilkins, Executive Secretary of the N.A.A.C.P. and Re. DR. Martin Luther King Jr. who rushed in when the strike was at a low ebb and pumped new energy into Negro citizens.

The strike spotlight however, has been taken by a group of militant ministers headed by the Rev. James M. Lawson Jr. While Mayor Henry Loeb continues to say NO to a union dues check-off...garbage trucks and workers continues to roll and make curbside pick-ups.

Meanwhile, the uninvolved strikers just sit and wait watching their bills grow high, but apparently enjoys all the fuss that is being made over them.

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D.C. – 2

Despite the sanitation sufferage [sic], the strikers are receiving food stamps from the city of Memphis and are getting some financial food help though the union from most local churches and schools.

As a result of this march lead in and/or for the behalf of the sanitation workers; for the first time ever in the city of Memphis, what was to be a peaceful march (non-violently) turned out to be one of the most chaotic animosities ever to be witnessed by a black or white citizen in Memphis...a riot.

This was a riot that involved and/or resulted in the destruction of private property, cruel police brutality to the innocent as well as the guilty, injured and killed people, and the city's young generation (the teenagers).

In conclusion, I only regret that it took the sanitation workers to open the eyes and minds of the unconcerned white people in Memphis, as well as the entire nation.

N.C. – 1

The Riot

On Thursday March 28 1968 Many Memphians gathered for what some of them thought would be a peaceful march in support of striking sanitation workers. What happen [sic] during the march was anything but peaceful. The actual assembling place for the marchers were Clayborn Temple, a local church, located on Ponotoc and Hernando. There were so many people involved in the march, however that by the time I arrived the group extended back a block from the Church to Vance which is where I stood. The march was suppose [sic] to start at 10 o'clock but Dr. King, the leader of the March did not arrive until later and it did not start until 20 minutes after eleven. In the meantime the people on the

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N.C. – 2

The (illegible) and in the march became so restless that at certain times the crowd would move simultaneously without being told to by march (illegible).

Alas I observed that there were a great many people standing on the sidelines who had no intentions of joining the march and at first I wondered why they would bother to come if they didn't intend to march. Of course a lot of them came out of curiosity just to see what would happen. But I spoke to someone who was standing on the sidelines and he said that the reason he came was to wait for the march to start so that he could start stealing things. I imagine know [sic] that a lot of people were there for that reason.

Some people started getting restless and joined those on the sidelines. They started saying "we don't need

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N.C. – 3

Martin Luther King came as we can start (illegible) march and they did even though it wasn't time, even before the march officially started. The march route was down Hernando and Beale and on to Main Street. The particular (illegible) of the march that I was in was on Beale in front of Pape's, a men shop. When a group of people came running

above the street toward us grinning and laughing and saying "go back the march is over." Most of us stood there confused and someone asked "what's wrong?" another person answered "they're rioting up there," meaning the portion of the march that had reached Main Street. Rev. Lawson, a local strike leader came down the street and told us to go quickly back to the church, Clayborn Temple. I backed

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N.C. - 4

up and saw what seemed a thousand people running my way and that's when people panicked, afterall [sic] not everyone (illegible) but many did.

Some people started running others like me stood there frightened while some who might have been peaceful in the march joined with others who would not have been so and started breaking windows and looting. The police started shooting mace at the crowd and then everyone started running. I ran back to the church where the police continued to shoot mace. Finally they stopped and I went home.

On the way home I noticed how quickly crowds had gathered followed by police who dispersed them just as quickly. I think that the riot produced a great deal of resentment between the races. White merchants and others resent Negroes

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N.C. - 5

who had looted, but by the same token Negroes who had always disliked the police in the city really hate them now because of police brutality. Negroes will never forget that 30 witnesses swear that the police shot a 16 year old boy in the stomach at close range while he had his hand in the air. Negro [sic] won't forget not will they forgive.

As costly as the riot was in terms of lives and property I don't think the people who run our city learned anything from it. They still think of it as a [sic] event in which people looted just for the sake of looting. They have failed to see that many people who stole did so because they had finally found a way of getting back at the city which

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N.C. - 6

has been so indifferent to them. The city does not seem to realize that calling in the National Guard will not stop these people from rioting again or looting if they get the chance to. Of course a lot of rioting and looting was merely for personal gains and still some was emotional contagion, people saw other people steal so they stole also, but not all was for these reasons but for the other reason. The physical conditions of the riot will disappear but not the memory of what happened in minds of Memphians. This is good, I think, perhaps those memories will stir the needed change (illegible)

50

M.W. - 1

Memphis Riot of 1968

Dr. Martin L. King led Memphis' greatest mass march on Thursday afternoon, March 28, 1968. The purpose of this march was to win support for the weary sanitation workers. These men request a small raise in salary, dues check off, and a host of other traditions regarding their plight. The city council refused these conditions on the ground that it was illegal for the public department to strike. This so called peaceful march turn [sic] out to be a riot. A group of young Negroes fled from the march and began throwing bottles, and looting. The policemen immediately took actions. They started beating and gassing with great force to get control of the so called mob.

Some incidents during the (illegible) crowd that did not reached [sic] the news were relatively numerous. One incident includes a tear-torn Negro woman trying to protect her baby in an effort to get out of the policeman's way. He was beating her and using very unfavorable language, and almost killing her child.

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M.W. - 2

A group of Negro boys seeing this became furious and began attacking the policeman.

Other incidents include blacken eyes, swollen faces, head injuries and tear gas was used in the face. During the curfew, which resulted from the march, many Negroes were subjected to foul language, beating, and were driven home when caught or stopped on the streets.

Since I did not attend the march, my information is based upon people who actually participated and witnessed these reports from observation, reading, and listening to others, I have concluded that the strike is probably the best thing that could have happen [sic] to this deep-south city. This alone should open the eyes of many Negroes and liberal whites of the fact that there is too much hatred and discrimination in our city. Memphis has always given the Negroes enough privileges to keep him quiet, enough privileges so that the [sic] cannot complain too much. It is time for the Negro to consider that the majority of their women are maids and too many men are garbage men and yard boys.

It is tragic that the workers have to go to such extreme methods to plead their cause. When the amount of damage, cost of National Guard, and police expenditures could have been given to the sanitation workers as a raise in salary.

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M.J.G. – 1

“Race Riot in Memphis”

Thursday, March 28, 1968 was a day of excitement, violence and bloodshed in Memphis. The Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. had been invited to lead a march in support of the striking sanitation workers. The sanitation workers had been striking since the early part of February for better wages and a dues check-off.

The march started about 11:15 from Clayborn Temple. Rev. Martin Luther King and some of the ministers of the city lead the march down Beale. About 150 or 200 young Negroes strayed from the main body of the march and began throwing bricks, bottles and sticks breaking the windows and looting. They became so violent that the march had to be stopped just as they turned on Main Street. Policemen had to use mace and their billy sticks to get the rioters turned back and the riot under control. This was just the beginning. The rioting was under control but the looting grew worse as the sanitation grew on the National Guardsmen were called in and a curfew from 7 p.m. to 5 a.m. was proclaimed by Mayor Loeb.

There were so many interesting and exciting incidents that it would be impossible to (illegible) all of them. There were many incidents of arson, disorderly conduct, night riding, and one fatality.

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M.J.G. – 2

Approximately 5:30 p.m. Mrs. Doe and her two small children were outside in their yard talking to a neighbor about the riot situation. A truck of National Guardsmen that there cruising the area ordered them back into their homes. After they refused they were sprayed with mace and called bad names.

Also, on Thursday, March 28, 1968 a young Negro boy was fatally wounded. Mrs. Jones, a bystander, told of the incident. Mrs. Jones reported that the youth was looting but when he saw the policeman he dropped the item he had and held his hands up in the air and was shot in the stomach by this policeman. Shortly afterwards, the youth was pronounced death at John Gaston Hospital.

These are just two incidents that happened on Thursday, there were many, many others.

I think (illegible) of these incidents were terrible. I think the lady and her children should have been allowed to stand in her yard and talk to a neighbor without being treated so coolly by the National Guardsmen who were suppose [sic] to be reducing the violence and not creating it. In the second incident, I think the policeman only did his job. In a situation such as this one, behavior is unpredictable and his first reaction was to

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M.J.G. – 3

Shoot. If the youth had not been looting in the beginning he might still be alive today. I think the policeman's behavior was spontaneous and he should not be punished for it.

I also think the riot was a situation that could have easily been avoided.

55

G.B. – 1

For years bitterness had been building within many Memphis Negroes over what they consider unequal treatment they receive from whites. Their houses are consider [sic] inferior to whites, their opportunities less (illegible) because of the color of their skin.

The riots brought out much of the bitterness that had been suppressed by the Negroes. From this time the riots began the black and white citizens of Memphis were under constant tension and fear. While fear was in the atmosphere, there are parts of incidents occurring during and after the riots. There were also rumors going around such as two predominately all Negroes high school were (illegible) Melrose and sanitation. Other incident that occurred were, many of my friends were receiving phone calls from who were trying to (illegible) many of the stolen items that had been looting during the riots. Once incident that happen [sic] was a friend of mine, Carl called and tried to sell one of the color televisions he had looted to my mother.

After the rioting the looting had occurred National Guardsmen arrive in the city and a five o'clock curfew was placed on the city.

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G.B. – 2

During the curfew, Kenny a friend, left his house only to make a short call, because of this he was pick [sic] up by the policeman, taken down to police headquarters, finger printed and arrested for leaving the house to make a phone call. These are only two of the incidents that occurred during the week of the riots.

No one really knew why these riots occurred and no one really knew why the people reacted the way they did during the riot, this probably what many white people and some negroes would say if they never had a taste of poverty, also if they have experience [sic] discrimination, prejudice or police brutality like many Negroes have experience [sic]. There is no real answer for the cause of riots, but they all stem from a suppressed group of human beings who are poor and sick in body and spirit, alas their minds have been twisted until the only thing they have left to speak for them are their emotions. These emotions that speaks for the people, usually speaks influence and this is what happen [sic] on March 28, 1968, a riot.

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E.T. – 1

Last Thursday March 28, 1968, Martin Luther King asked that no one neither go to school nor go to work, but come and participate in a protest march that was to go through downtown Memphis. This march was in behalf of the sanitation workers of expressing dissatisfaction in the way in which Mayor Henry Loeb was handling the situation.

This was to be a peaceful and orderly march that was to start at Clayborn Temple and end at Clayborn Temple after the march had gone through town, down Main Street. Before the march had begun many of the youths participating in the march seemed very enthused about the march.

After the march reached Beale, I was walking in front of a crowd that burst a window out of a liquor store. When this happened this is when the march seemed to be anything but orderly and peaceful to me. There were many store windows broken, and after a window was

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E.T. – 2

broken in a store many people began to go in and get as much merchandise as he could hold and throwing it out of the store. Many of the marchers were trying to march safety because if they police weren't marching then they were getting run over by the people running from the mace. Many of the marchers were beaten and stomped by police officers. This march that started peaceful [sic] ended up in a mass of confusion with many innocent people getting hurt and arrested for something that they either didn't do or because some police officers got angry and beat them or arrested them because they had the authority.

Before closing this paper I would like to give my opinion on these aspects of this crisis. They are the violence that was employed in the march by the police department, Loeb's refusal to meet and make some type of compromise, and the effect of the march.

I think that a lot of the force exerted by the police department during the march was unnecessary. Sure, there is a reasonable amount of force that has to be exerted by the police in order to preserve

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E.T. – 3

Order, but not to the point where there are five or six policemen beating a man when he's already down and almost bleeding to death. There were many people at the march that was [sic] forced to run from many club swinging cops because if they hadn't they might have been beaten to death. Like I said at the beginning force was necessary to break up the disturbance, but I think that this force was overused and misused.

Loeb's refusal to recognize the union and give the sanitation workers a raise seems to be a rather trivial matter to cause all of the disturbance. The sanitation workers should be granted a raise because just as a bookkeeper has an incentive to go into his profession because it is a clean job; I think that the sanitation workers should get a raise and recognition of a union as an incentive to perform their line of work because the job is dirty and back breaking. Loeb's refusal to do this seems to be inhuman as well as a lack of common sense to me. Loeb's main problem seems to be that of pride. He doesn't recognize a union, but in order to conquer this problem Loeb is going to have to stop on some of his pride.

60

E.T. – 4

The march seems to have been very effective because it hurts the pocket book of many businessmen. These businessmen are now beginning to put pressure on the mayor to dissolve this problem. In closing, something will have to give because things can't just go on as they have.

61

J.W. – 1

The riot in Memphis, Tennessee just didn't happen on Thursday at 11:00 a.m. but the tendencies for a riot have been present in Memphis for a long time. Thursday we merely had a confrontation with the nasty atrocities of a riot-like situation. The turmoil in Memphis was nothing compared to the trouble in Watts, Newark or Detroit in terms of property destroyed and the lost [sic] of lives, but in terms of the good rare relations Memphis has had, the disturbance was more dreadful than anyone of the others.

I arrived at Clayborn Temple about 10:00 a.m. and the crowd then was an orderly one. The sanitation question was secondary to the marchers, the race question or problem had become the primary reason for some 5,000 individuals to demonstrate. Dr. Martin Luther King arrived at Clayborn Temple about 10:50 and the march got underway shortly. The march went along in now-violent pattern of Dr. King but in a matter of minutes the calm march had turned into a disorderly crowd. I heard Rev. Lawson in the background of all the confusion and noise. He was requesting of the crowd to return to Clayborn Temple. From what I saw Thursday, the disturbance was caused by about 100 young individuals who were waiting for the marchers to get near them in order to camouflage their dirty work. Famous Beale Street was covered with paper, pieces of glass and other debris. The fashionable stores like Pape's and Lansky Brother were wrecked. Looters were wrecked along with others (illegible)

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J.W. – 2

On the main street in the downtown section the damage was relatively light with only a few showcase windows broken and not much loot taken. I saw the ugly scars of the riot around the city.

Even before the riot, in the downtown section got (illegible) there was trouble at Hamilton High School. A friend of mine briefed me on the situation. Johnny Jones said and I quote, "a number of student [sic] at Hamilton were blocking the entrance, then bricks and bottles were thrown in the immediate area. Sometime later the police came and put the disturbance down to normal. Jones said, "bystanders were struck [sic] with police clubs and called obscene names. Police brutality during the so-called riot was widespread, speculators were sprayed with the chemical mace and brutalized by our policemen. But as usually [sic] complaints against our law enforcement officers.

One individual was killed while supposedly looting Sears South Third. This was the policeman's account and also the policeman said, the youth had a weapon in his hand and was coming toward him after he was caught in the act of looting. Shirley Bars, a neighbor, said "the youth hands were up over his head and he didn't have a knife but the lone

policeman shot anyway. The N.A.A.C.P. has looked in the matter and at present still deeply involved.

I was present on the riot scene on Beale and I saw using entirely too much force in order to apprehend the looters. The policemen behaved like incompetent, inexperienced, abusive employees of the city of Memphis. The policeman (illegible)

63

J.W. – 3

of white racism, acted their part beautifully and deserved an award for their now (illegible) performance.

64

D.L.G. – 1

## GIVE ME JUSTICE

Hatred prevailed high in the (illegible) the first day of the march for the sanitation workers (illegible) was to be led by the Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King (illegible) march was aimed at giving the sanitation workers (illegible) and the recognition of their union.

The older people of the march has in mind just peaceful march to show the city that they would worry them if the workers didn't get their raise. The teenagers and the black power advocates, however, picked this day to demonstrate to the white power structure that "either we get or we will destroy" attitudes.

The Police Department itself started the trouble when the [sic] tried to keep kids from leaving school to go to the march. This alone angered many of the students who really was [sic] for non-violence and a peaceful (illegible) march. Then after a few policemen beat [sic] other teenagers in the restraint, non-violence easily shifted to violent attitudes.

As the march beganned [sic], Dr. King had to control only the people whose only intention was to march. Others we angered because the Mayor Henry Loeb would not grant anything in favor of the striking workers; some because hated white for slavery of their grandfathers' then some was just retaliation to the police force. From the beginning the marchers were divided, non-violence and violence.

The black power advocates was also organized in that there would be a signal of the first window breaking as the start of it all. Orders for the marchers were "let us march in Peace". While orders for the rioters we were "got to the city hall—hear Dr. King—on our way back down Main street it starts."

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D.L.G – 2

The sound of breaking glass came, only it was just a bottle—which was a false alarm. Our being tense, someone broke the first window of a pawn shop of famous Beale Street. Then like spontaneous combustion windows were broken, looting started, and a few policemen ranned [sic].

These few policemen got reinforcements from other cops with gas masks and helmets on. These stupid cops started firing tear gas at the marchers. The rioters and looters, however, stayed behind the marchers using the marchers as a diversionary tactic to cover up for them. A group of swing happy policemen started beating everyone in sight. This really begun [sic] the clash. Store supplies began to vanish, windows were crashed, merchandise was looted or annihilated, and more policemen were beat [sic]. One looter was quoted saying, "for every Negro they beat, we got three of them".

Dr. King called a halt in the march as the trouble reached its intensity. With the policemen ready to shoot anyone who even spit too hard, Dr. King's aids rushed him unnoticed [sic] to a car, which took him back to his hotel.

The marchers and the rioters later felt nothing was accomplished that day. One marcher said, "we didn't want that to happen", while at the same times a rioter said "we didn't want that to happen", while at the same times a rioter said "we didn't do enough". And do you know—we didn't.

66

J.B. – 1

The place, Memphis, Tennessee, the time (illegible) and for (illegible) the march of non-violence in (illegible) the sanitation workers for higher wages and seeking compensations. But (illegible) of the (illegible) reported by looters of the march, young (illegible) fifty some marchers turned the march into violence.

On April 1, 1968, I interviewed a man by the name of Mr. X. The name has been changed to protect the innocent.

Mr. X stated first of all his reason why the (illegible) occurred, "fellows were sitting around drinking wine and beer while waiting for the march to began [sic]. (Illegible) the time between 10:00 a.m. and 11:15 a.m., the fellows began to talk about looting stores and most of all how they would be dressed and how much money could be made if they hit certain stores like (illegible), pawn shops. And liquor stores".

67

J.B. - 2

Mr. X said, "I had the intentions of just marching peacefully. But after a couple of fellows and myself heard that the march was being turned around at Beale and Third, we decided to do something. So, about 12:05 p.m., we broke the windows out of a liquor store on the corner of Fernando, right off of Beale. Upon leaving, I had secured about (illegible) and three pints of liquor".

Mr. X also stated why they did break in the liquor store. He stated that, "the idea was to hurt the businessmen so that they would in turn get on Mayor Loeb's back and give the sanitation workers what they are asking for".

My personal feelings toward the march is that, asking as they stick to non-violence they

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J.B. - 3

might face (illegible) something. They should keep a lot of the youngsters out of the march or to the un-(illegible) part of some and not all. I think that the marchers should be more organized than they are at the present time. Because of the violence brought on by the marchers, the mayor is just becoming more and more rebellious towards the sanitation workers I do not like the mayor myself, not only for this reason but on the present issue as a man in thinking of the past(illegible) and the compensation received by the families and also the type of work in which they do. We should consider this and give into the wants and needs of these people. The only thing I hate is that the people cannot hurt him in any kind of way.

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C.M. - 1

Thursday's March

I, myself had not the opportunity to personally witness any of the activities that occurred on Thursday. I did not participate in the march, unfortunately I cannot truthfully say I saw what happened.

But, on the other hand, I talked with several students who participated in or witnessed the march on Thursday. One student, Curtis Bond, age 21, said that the rioting and looting that occurred had been planned for a long time by these teenagers who participated and the march was their answer. He said that they had no intention marching for the sanitation strikers' cause, but their own cause. He said that even his friends that he never thought would do such a thing, were in store windows, looting. I questioned him about the shooting of the teenager, but he knew nothing personally about it.

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C.M. - 2

I talked with another student, Louise McFarland, who is an active member of the NAACP and participates in all marches. She told me of the police brutality that she encountered and that which she saw. She said that she and several other girls were sprayed in the face with tear gas for no reason at all. She said she saw policemen shove and hit the marchers without just causes. She said that even after the marchers had been turned back and returned to Mason Temple, the police still attempted to shoot tear gas and beat the marchers. Her reaction and statement about the sixteen year old youth was that he was innocent and had his hands above his head and that he had taken nothing. She said a youth had run to the place where Larry was and when the police ordered that person to come out Larry same

and his hands were over his head. I, also talked with Mark Jones, twenty-three years of age. He stated that the youth had no knife, but a friend with him had a

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C.M. – 3

knife and this is where the knife came from.

The only comment I (illegible) make on the march and its activities on Thursday is that I hated to see all of this happen in Memphis, but maybe this is the only way that the Negroes can prove that they are people and that their desires and wants are important. And perhaps riots and violence are the best methods because the white man has dwelled on violence for years, but his violence wasn't called violence because it was done to the Negroes and not by the Negroes.

72

R. R. – 1

Report on Loeb Thursday's Disturbances

On last Thursday, March 28, 1968, the city of Memphis was rocked by an outburst of violence. This was the first time that the city had experienced such a thing and it will probably experience that much more violence if it does not act in good faith toward the striking workers.

To get down to the problem at hand I interviewed two people, who participated in last Thursday's march, which was led by Dr. Martin Luther King.

The first person I interviewed was a young man. His name was James Thunder, not his real name, but I will call him that now. James is 22 yrs. Old, he participated in the march on last Thursday and this is his account of what happened.

On Thursday, March 28, 1968, I participated in the march led by Dr.

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R.R. – 2

Martin Luther King. I like all the rest were marching had my placard and was really looking forward to enjoying the march. As I rounded the corner of Beale and Main, I heard something which sounded like glass being broken. I turned around and saw people scattering all over the place, some were dodging bricks and bottles, others were looking for a place to hide. By now the police had arrived on the scene, telling everyone to turn around and head back to the church, the policemen began beating on them and pushing them. Sometimes as many as 2 or 3 policemen would attack one person at a time. One lady was knocked down and beaten about the head until the blood started pouring from her head. I made it back to the church and was sitting down. All of a sudden tear gas started coming into the church. I knew then that it was time for me to leave.

74

R.R. – 3

Mr. Thunder's statement ended right there and it was apparent that the policemen did not use good judgment in handling the situation.

The next person I interviewed was a young lady whose name I do not care to mention. I will call her Geraldine Riley. Miss Riley is 17 yrs. Old, and she also participated in the march last Thursday.

She told me that, the march started off peacefully until she saw some boys throw rocks and bottles into windows. Fortunately for her she had not got exactly on Main Street. She and some friends of hers, ran into a nearby home. She told me that as she looked out the window of the home, she could see the policemen beating people needlessly. Anyone that they happened to run upon, got his with the policemen's

75

R.R. – 4

sticks, or they had mace sprayed into their face and then they were beaten.

From these two eyewitnesses accounts by these two people, I can conclude that it was an error on both parts.

The young people who started the disturbance by breaking out the windows ruined what was to be a perfect march.

The policemen did not use good judgment in handling the situation and virtually they have set the people that participated last Thursday in the march, against them.

76

C.J. – 1

### My Eye-View of the Riot in Memphis

When I arrived at the scene where the march was to begin I noticed, to my estimation, that there were around 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 people. The march was very late getting started, for what reason I do not know, but as I walked through the crowd I heard almost every person around me say that the most terrible thing has come out of this sanitation-workers strike and that is racial disturbances. A lot of people had different opinions of what they thought could end the strike. Some people thought that boycotting, marching and constant meetings between councilmen and union leaders would be effective, this opinion was among most of the older members of the march. The opinion that seemed to be characteristic of the younger members of the march was to tear up the white man's property and make him lose a lot of money. They thought that by doing this the whole business owner

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C.J. – 2

would pressure Loeb into giving the strikers what they wanted. I thought that many of these youngsters weren't for the benefit of the strikers but the benefit of themselves by looting and getting a lot of clothes, etc.

When the march reached Beale Street there seemed to be a lot of disturbance when I reached the area in front of Pape's Men Store. Rev. Lawson was telling everyone to turn around. I wondered why was he telling us to turn around and then I saw the broken window. When I began to turn around I heard another window break and people were grabbing the clothing out of the window, then I saw the people behind me running from Main Street so I panicked and began to run. When I reached the church I heard loud gun blast and I thought someone was shooting a gun then I saw people running inside the church holding their eyes and crying and someone said, "the police are shooting

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C.J. – 3

tear gas inside the church," everyone began to panic (illegible) the Negro leaders were telling them to keep calm. Just then I looked to my right and I saw a girl screaming so loud, I wondered what was wrong and someone said that the police had shot "mace" directly in her eyes. My eyes began to feel weak and I could hardly keep them open then I heard another blast everyone started screaming, I began to get very afraid. After everything had quieted down the people began to leave the church I could see that everyone was either mad or afraid. As I could see down Vance I noticed a lot of windows broken then I remembered Detroit and the conditions it had last summer and I wondered if Memphis would be another Detroit. As I passed many people they were all saying that this would have never happened if Loeb wasn't the mayor.

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B.W. – 1

### The Unsuccessful March

Thursday morning of March 28, 1968, I walked down Vance to Hernando Street to see the gathering of hundreds of Negroes and a few (illegible) at about 10 a.m. They were waiting on Rev. Martin L. King, who was to lead this (illegible) march for the purpose of justice being done for the sanitation workers (strikers). Before Rev. King arrived, the crowd carried posters and were discussing what they were going to do. I heard one Negro tell another that "as soon as they start breaking windows, I am going to get some watches and diamonds." I could see then that this man had the wrong spirit.

Rev. King led the mass march from Clayborn Temple to Main Street. I was told by one of the marchers that some started throwing bricks and breaking windows, and that the marchers were stopped at York Arms (store on Main).

They had to return to the Temple, and Peaches (one of the marchers) said that mace was sprayed into the Temple. I feel that this was wrong and very unfair on the part of the policemen because the insiders

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B.W. – 2

were not harming anyone.

About thirty minutes later, I saw and heard fire trucks and police squad cars going down Vance where many stores had been burned and damaged. People were running from the direction of Beale St., cursing which did not do any good. The policemen were shooting at someone on Third St., and many Negroes were hurt other places, I was told. There was stealing, shooting, beating and spraying of mace.

Some of the eyewitnesses' statements were"

Mrs. E.K. – "Thursday, about 12:30 a.m., watch from the windows of King Cotton Cleaner, I saw 19 or 24 boys from 16-19 years old with planks, bricks and bottles. They went around Sears (on 3rd St.) and broke out all of the windows. Their faces were not covered, and I didn't recognize any of them. As I was driving off, they went over to the cleaners and started breaking windows. The workers were running and screaming. After a while the policemen came."

Mrs. K. – "I didn't see the boy (Larry Payne-16) get shot, but I saw the policemen spraying mace into the face of people

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B.W. – 3

who lined up (illegible) the home on Mason St. the policemen dared them to come down, and one (illegible) policeman spit at one of the girls who worked with me. Mrs. Payne went to the hospital with me. Mrs. Payne went to the hospital, and they wouldn't let her see him. It was awful, and we need to pay."

Peaches (a marcher)- "A man was pulled out of his car and (illegible) by the policemen."

Sister G- "A policeman kicked an old lady in the street and started hitting a man with his stick. They were both standing at the bus stop."

Thursday was a frightening and dreadful day, and some of the marchers took advantage of Rev. King's march for their own evil gain, which was wrong. Prayer is the only answer to these problems, and God will judge the length of his trouble. If God doesn't stop it, other men and Loeb sure can not.

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L.Y. – 1

The Negroes March on Memphis

It was on March 28 at 9:00 on a Thursday morning that I arrived uptown to participate in a march that was supposed to be non-violent, for the Memphis sanitation workers. When I arrived up town the other marchers were already assembled. At that moment it looked to me as if there were about or over a thousand people there then. While me and my friends stood talking about school and all the (illegible) that didn't go, the march started. After we had gotten to Beale Street the people in the march started going on until I heard windows being broken. The next thing I knew, this fellow beside me had seized a brick and had thrown it threw [sic] the window of Pape's Men's Shop. Then a couple of fellows broke the rest of the window and got the merchandise that was in the window case. After this a repetition of window breaking and looting occurred. A couple of fellows broke to Lonsky Bros. and pull whole racks of clothing out into the street. They broke into the pawn shops and took electric guitars, radios, jewelry and anything they could get their hands on. All this time I was just standing looking in awe, not knowing what to do. There were bricks, broken glass and valuable merchandise lying all over the streets. It was at this time that I heard sirens and the next thing I know

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L.Y. – 2

was the march had disrupted and the participants had become panic. The police came through the crowd swing [sic]

their Billy sticks and girls and almost half of the people in the march were running, screaming and falling. I was trying to run for safety also. I saw a policeman grab a teenage boy and beat (illegible) blood streamed from his head. The policemen were (illegible) and everybody. After the police had beaten so many of the people with their Billy sticks, some of the boys decided to fight back. (All this was happening as I was steadily running through the crowd.) I saw a policeman get his head busted by a flying brick. I saw a fellow stab a policeman in the back with a knife. The policemen did things I never thought they would do. Some of them look as if they got joy out of beating Negroes. I saw them beat a fellow across the head until he couldn't stand up. After the teenagers started fighting back the policemen started using tear gas. This is the only harm that came to me that day. The gas seemed to spread, it got into my eyes, burned them, after this, I got as far away from the crowd as I could. After reaching my car, I started home, I saw policemen chasing Negro

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L.Y. - 3

youths . After getting (illegible), trying to escape what seemed like a dream (illegible).

I wish all of this hadn't happen, but, I feel that it is the fault of Mayor Loeb. If he had given the sanitation workers a raise, all of this would have never happened.

The breaking in and looting was caused by outsiders and not by the participants in the march so I think that the march isn't the cause of this, but, the looters use the march as a [sic] aid in their looting.

85

C.D. - 1

The Longest Hate Week in Memphis

It all happened one March 28 day in which I will never forget and eyewitnesses on the scene of the violence that broke out on Beale Street Thursday afternoon told me:

The marchers assembled at Clayborn Temple. I figure there was close to 3,000 people there consisting of teenagers, striking sanitation workers, businessman and people from all walks of life. The crowd was filled with great enthusiasm as chatter and laughter swept through the air. People from all parts of Memphis came to participate in this historic march. For it was remarked that this was the first big thing that the Negroes in Memphis has [sic] ever staged and enough Negroes came out to participate and support it.

The marchers left Clayborn Temple at exactly 11:30 or maybe a little before 12:00 noon. The marchers were very orderly or rather conducted themselves in a suitable manner upon entering Beale Street.

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C.D. - 2

We were swamped with policemen upon hitting Beale Street, they were stained all around with Billy clubs that are now much larger than the old ones. Some policemen even had mace already holding it in they're [sic] hands as though the violence had already begun. Really to be frank the policemen wanted something to get started by the way in which they were swaying their clubs to and fro. Some of the policemen were (illegible) at the marchers who passed by with signs reading "Down With Loeb" trying to excite portions of the marchers to get an outbreak.

Then all of the sudden like out of nowhere a policeman dashed from his point out into the crowd to billy club a youngster for no apparent reason. This incident took place I'd say in the middle of Beale Street. After the policemen charged in on the youth several other youth's team up to help the defenseless youth. Then the next thing happen fighting and

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C.D. - 3

smashing of windows commenced. Policemen already with mace in their hands begun spraying and squirting anyone they could get. The street by this time was blocked off and no one could neither leave or enter Beale Street during this free for all. The reason why I say "free for all" is because that's exactly what it (illegible) even though if you hadn't broken a window as as such if the policemen caught you they would gang up on you and Billy club you good and I do

mean good. Blood began flowing down the faces of men both black and white boys it was a sight to see. The policemen really got mad or hot when they saw some of their own fellow policemen faces streaming with blood. Then the policemen ran out in the streets beating marchers as though they were in (illegible) it was at this time I made my exit at the nearest alley.

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C.D. - 4

My own personal opinion concerning the riot is that from what I have observed during the past week the city, Loeb, Police department, and especially the newspaper over-emphasized the march they themselves put tension in the air along with the vandalism that has been going on this past week. By bringing in the National Guard for them to do simply nothing but hide in jeeps, and trucks on a (illegible) of the city. And to lie under (illegible) with policemen. This commenced on March 28 on (illegible) at about 2:00 in the afternoon. The city has lost, more money since the strike's been on the cost of those National Guards alone amounted to \$14,000 the damaged [sic] on Beale Street even though covered by insured [sic] amounted to \$400,000.

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C.D. - 5

Then there is the cost of the extra policemen that trails the sanitation trucks everyday. Yes I say the city has lost it's reputation as being the (illegible) and cleanest city it is now known widely of its front it has been displaying to the country. Memphis is not no better than Watts, Harlem, or any of the other nationally known ghettos.

90

E.S. - 1

On March 28, 1968, I accepted the personal honor to be among an approximate 20,000 marchers to march for the sanitation strikers and Negroes' rights, in general, for better wages. It started under the headlines of a non-violent march and by not thinking about what was done, this march became an unwanted riot.

It start [sic] a little late due to the lateness of the mass leader. As we proceeded from the temple, we turned on Beale and Proceeded up toward Main. All at once without notice several thousands of the marchers begin to break up windows, with sticks and bricks, upon the businesses of the non-Negroes. It was a surprise to everyone, especially the leader of the mass march. As the majority of the marchers begin to break up into little groups, policemen from everywhere pursued us with mace, sticks, gas, and some with guns. IT was just like being surrounded by hostile Indians. About five of us run up toward Front Street and turned down Front to a cut off street due to the blockade set up by the policemen. After going south on to lower Main, I proceed [sic] to hike home with my friends.

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E.S. - 2

When I arrived, I went to turn on the news and listen for a while, while (illegible) talked about incidents all over downtown Memphis (illegible). So I advisably stayed at home.

That evening, I had to work until seven o'clock. I heard on the radio that the mayor had issued a curfew from 7pm-5am. Upon getting off a little early, I proceeded down Mississippi to Trigg and I just happen [sic] to see some officers clubbing and (illegible) a small group of youngsters, I just (illegible) they didn't (illegible) about the curfew starting at 7pm or either they wanted to start beating heads before time came. At 7, lucky me arrived home, without being hit beat up or what have you. Upon listening to the news(illegible), the mayor said the curfews apply to those with illegal business on the street, and those with legal business could go about their normal business. Upon asking some neighbors, who just arrived home after the curfew start, I founded [sic] out that the curfew apply mostly to Negroes in an effort to keep them in, off of the streets. So knowing the way the mayor feels about our people and the National Guardsmen, who didn't know except what they were told by others officials, I knew someone, somewhere was getting it.

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E.S. - 3

Upon calling a friend on the weekend, I founded out what he was arrested for breaking in a store. I ask him how it all happen [sic] and he told me. He said that he was about 20 feet from (illegible) at a telephone booth, when policemen

said he had broken in a store. His appearance, which consists of house shoes and other house clothing (the shirt and old dirty short pants) should of answer the officers questions about the break in beforehand, from just a physical point of view. Fortunately, he wasn't beat up or misused by the policemen, but was arrested. He had to pay a lawyer just a few hundred dollars to get him out, for just using a public telephone. Just about all the lawyers in town made a little money getting out people arrested for being out after the curfew. I was so glad to see Monday morning arriving knowing that a few days ago were just like a nightmare.

In my opinion, Dr. King, a non-violent march leader, had no intention or idea that there was going to be violence. Most of the marchers had only one purpose of marching only for the sole reason of looting the businesses. If the other leaders had seen that certain elements were extracted from the march or had seen to those elements held down, then I believe the march wouldn't had [sic] been violent.

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E.S. - 4

By not sticking together as a group and having every possible reason for doing what we do, then we will never achieve (illegible) other goals worthwhile in the eyes of the whites unless we fought hard to unite with unity of mind and oneness of purpose, in our marches.

94

Q.T. - 1

Sanitation March

In writing an actual account of the sanitation march held in Memphis Thursday, I decided to interview a friend, who was an active participant in the march. Also, in the interview I have selected initials instead of names. Miss E and Miss C. The interview went something like this.

"Miss C tell me all about the march don't leave out a single incident include everything that your eyes witness," replied Miss E. "Well, Miss E I went downtown Thursday morning about 9:00 o'clock to join in the march. The march was announce on the radio, that all the marchers meet at Clayborn Temple. So I decided to walk down Beale to the church. As I approach Clayborn Temple I decided not to go inside, but there were other marchers who did. I begin to mingle and talk with the other marchers, who were waiting. As we were talking one of the leaders pass handouts to the marchers. Miss E interrupted, "what was the leader's name?" "I don't know," replied

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Q.T. - 2

Miss C. "I won't interrupt any more continue, replied Miss E. "But the leader informed the marchers to conduct themselves as orderly as possible. I remembered two rules, while I call rules (illegible) if any marcher approach by a policeman, who trys [sic] to (illegible) the march with mace please cover face with coat or any garment to prevent damage to the eyes (illegible) the marcher should notice the person in front, because if this marcher stops the one behind should stop .After the brief instruction we waited a few more hours more. I check my watch, and it was about 11:00 o'clock, and we were instructed to organize and arrange ourselves, and prepare for the march. The only delayed was Dr. King. Shortly after 11:00 o'clock I'll say 11:15 Dr. King arrived, and the crowd cheered, and we began to walk from the church to Hernando Street. As we were walking I heard a loud crash, and I turned around to see what had happen [sic]. A boy or one could call him a man broke some glass. I hadn't expected

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Q.T. - 3

I hadn't expected violence to enter in the march. At that moment, the marchers begin to panic. So one of Dr. King's marchers foresaw other outsiders to participate in the march. The marshals were pleading and begging with the outsiders to participate in the march. But the outsiders completely ignored the marshals plead, and continued their rampage. Well, I still remain until the other marchers until some of the rioters begin to disband the marchers. So I decided to leave the march, because I was frighten [sic]." Glass was in the street, and people were screaming. I ran all the way home.

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### My Reaction to the Sanitation March

I feel that the march was plan [sic] very carefully (illegible) marches held in Memphis . But I feel that the main drawback in the march is to insist, that teenagers (illegible) children (illegible) out of classes (illegible) in the march. Many (illegible) mature enough to engage in (illegible) activity. For example, in the paper I wrote about Miss C, how many teenagers would have remain in the march, when glass was broken as Miss C did? I could probably count the teenagers, who would have remain [sic] calm in the march. However, I feel that more concentration should have been placed on adults and college students. For example, examine McCarthy strategy members, which quite different from the sanitation march. But, I am trying to make point [sic] most of his support was from college students. I conclude on the whole the march was plan [sic] carefully, and as a result of the march it has been quite effective.

98

L.J. - 1

### The March That Turned into a Riot

On Tuesday, March 28, 1968 I participated in the march on city hall, led by Dr. Martin Luther King began to gather at Clayborn Temple on Hernando Street at about 9:30 A.M. This was the starting point of the march. People of all ages and physical conditions were present. (illegible) used elementary, high school, and college students, professional people, common laborers, white liberals and sanitation workers. All of these people were marching and protesting the rights of the sanitation workers to have a union which was denied by city officials headed by Mayor Henry Loeb. The people, including the blind and crippled carried (illegible) signs that said, "I am a man," "Justice and equality for all men," "Jobs, jobs, jobs," and (illegible) for the sanitation workers."

Between 10 A.M. and 11:30 A.M., about the time the march began, small groups and then (illegible) formed and advocate what the participants in the march should do. The groups either advocated violence or non-violence. The majority of the groups that advocated violence were composed of boys and men, ranging from the ages of about 15-35 years of age. Most of these had been drinking and they encouraged the participants to loot, (illegible), kill and other forms of

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L.J. - 2

violence and vandalism. The group that I marched along with was the Black Students Association of Memphis State University. The groups (illegible) Lee Jenkins (age 20) a friend and sophomore at Memphis State. He (illegible)march, but insisted that the (illegible) obligated to (illegible) the (illegible) children in (illegible). At about 11:30, due to the late arrival of Dr. King, the much higher (illegible).

By the time we reached Second St., we could hear shouting "They're looting the stores!" From that moment, boys and men began (illegible) windows (illegible), and started grabbing clothes, jewelry, musical instruments and (illegible).

Shortly, we heard the calm voice of Reverend Lawson asking, "Please don't panic; turn around and march back to the temple." He repeated this for about five minutes. So the people ran and panicked [sic] like ants from a disturbed ant hill. Eddie and I tried to stop them, but we found that this was in vain and parted.

Eddie and I hitched a mile with (illegible) other students from Memphis State and rode (illegible). On our walk home Eddie and I discussed the situation and (illegible). On our walk home Eddie and I discussed the situation and how the riot could have possibly been prevented.

We concluded that the riot could have possibly been prevented if the marchers had been well orientated before the march, therefore knowing how to meet at the first out-

100

L.J. - 3

break of violence, preventing injuries to themselves and policemen and preventing further violence that led to the riot.

101

J.P. - 1

## “An Account of the Downtown Riot”

The crowd assembled at the Mason Temple to await the beginning of the march on behalf of the sanitation workers. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was scheduled to arrive in Memphis at 10:30 a.m. to lead the march. The crowd consisted of men, women, and children of all ages.

Due to the flight difficulties Dr. King arrived late and the march had started without him. However, upon his arrival the crowd burst into cheers. There was such a great disturbance that Dr. King had a difficult time calming the crowd. After he managed to quiet the marchers and make his way to the front, then the march was officially on its way.

The march travelled the route of Mason Avenue to Third Street and continued to Beale Street. During this time the march was quiet, calm and completely controlled while carrying their signs and posters. They even remained orderly while shouting “I am a man and...” They remained peaceful until a

102

J.P. – 2

young teenager stepped [sic] from the crowd, broke a window and yelled “Burn down this Mother Fucking Memphis.” The crowd then burst into cheers with a large portion of it forming smaller groups.

These smaller groups started the looting and continued to break out more windows of various places on Beale Street. These (illegible) of the crowd continued and increased to the degree that they were completely uncontrollable. These actions of the crowd brought the police into the action.

The policemen’s reaction to the conduct was the immediate pushing and clobbering of individuals. During the passing of blows many innocent victims were struck while trying to flee from the violence. Moreover, the policemen tended to go a bit overboard in controlling the crowd, which resulted in inquiries of many persons.

For example, there was a man about 70 or 80 years of age on a walking cane who was trying hard to remove himself from the massive confusion when an officer struck massive confusion when an officer struck him on the back of the head with a rifle.

103

J.P. – 3

The man would have been involved in the destructive actions prior to this instance but there was no (illegible) of such actions at this time. The crowd that had turned to a famous mob sought revenge on the policemen by sticking them on the head and clobbering them with sticks or what ever was available.

At this point Memphis could have been a seen [sic] from a battlefield in Vietnam. People were running over each other, screaming and hollering at each other. The most brutal incident occurred when a policeman, walking along Main Street, struck a young boy about 8 years old on the head with a club. The boy fell to the ground but the policemen continued clobbering the boy until a Negro struck him on the head with a brick which caused the policeman to fall. After he fell a crowd of Negro youth gave him several blows.

The march in behalf of the sanitation workers, that started out with complete control, continued this massive violence until it was finally supervised and controlled later in the day.

104

E.Y. – 1

This (illegible) paper on the riot itself but a poem that attempts to give light on the strike, the march, and the climaxing riot.

I felt that if I wrote a paper that truth could not be called exactly the truth, maybe because of my race or my minor prejudices. So I decided to write a poem.

This poem is not scholarly writer or beautifully rhymed, but it’s the way I feel and I hope you receive the meaning I’m trying to convey.

105

E.Y. – 2

### Only God Knows

It was the 12th day of February in the year 1968

I turned on the radio and got the news a few minutes late

But I heard the news reporter distinctly say,

“the sanitation workers went on strike today,

They are striking for better working conditions, higher wages, and the like,

And until they receive these basic job requirements they will remain on strike.”

The true origin of the strike, is like the cause of colds

Man might say what he thinks, but only God knows.

Several weeks later the issue remained unsettled,

Tempers grew hot as boiling water in a kettle.

A number of mass meetings were held to obtain the sympathizers support,

In these meeting were explained what they were striking for and things of this sort.

The meetings grew larger and better each blessed night,

And on March the 18th God’s people behold a glorious sight.

Rev. Martin Luther King Jr., a non-violent man,

Who came to give his support of the workers stand.

As Rev. King, “A Moses in due time,”

Entered Mason Temple his presence was to many an inspiration sign.

He walked toward the platform and no one their joy could keep,

For the feelings he displayed were so humble and so meek.

106

E.Y. – 3

In his address he spoke little of the accumulated garbage,

But proposed that sympathizers (illegible).

He also planned an enormous demonstration,

In which he solicited every ones [sic] co-operation.

The time, date and place of the march was set

And Rev. King would arrive the day before the march by jet

On Thursday before the alleged Friday’s mass demonstration,

It rained, sleeted the snow in great accumulation.

No one had ever witnessed weather like this before,

But there was something about it we should of [sic] done

It didn't snow because man for it had prayed  
But because God wanted the march to be delayed.  
Why then on Thursday did the sky drop 17 inches of snow  
Just as you, I have my beliefs, but only God knows.  
The march was postponed and set for another date  
I believe it was the following Thursday March the 28th.  
The march began and had gone several blocks.  
When young militants began to break windows with sticks and rocks.  
They destroyed stores on Beale from third St. almost to Main,  
But out of all this stealing and destruction, "What was gained?"  
The policemen, after standing by as teenagers bought liquor right before their face  
Finally decided, after the looting had started, to use their mace.  
The mace did a good job, just as a pen would to write better.  
But for a greater effect their clubs and guns (illegible) to do better

107

E.Y. - 4

What ignited the so-called riot? Was it the intoxicated kids, the Invaders, the Black Powerist or the sight of the beautiful clothes.  
We can believe what we may or say what we like but only God knows.  
The policemen really earned their salaries that day because they did a wonderful job, I need not to say.  
There were a few comments made about their personality and an enormous amount of complaints of police brutality.  
Is this true or is this heresy?  
(Illegible) the police and God know this very day.  
Four thousand National Guardsmen were called to Memphis right away,  
And were paid approximately seven thousand dollars per day.  
If the city of Memphis can pay that much per day,  
Do you think they would raise the Sanitation Workers pay?  
I didn't say anything about our mayor elect,  
Because I might say something I would later regret, I don't think the mayor should receive all the blame,  
But only the credit for contributing to the flame.  
In order to keep the truth moving just as the wheels of time rolls,  
I conclude it by saying, the truth and the facts  
ONLY GOD KNOWS.

108

J.P. – 1

## The Memphis Riot

Editor's Note: Since I was (illegible) during the protest march that sparked the Memphis (illegible) with attempt to give the (illegible) in the march and witnessed the down town rioting at Clayborn Temple, the (illegible) for the (illegible) workers lead by civil rights (illegible) Dr. Martin Luther King, at 10 o'clock for the beginning of the march. At the time of Tom's arrival there was only about 2000 people assembled for the march. Carter noticed that there were a large number of Priests, nuns and ministers assembled out front of the (illegible). I also noticed that the liquor store in the neighborhood was during extremely good business. As time pasted [sic] the crowd grew larger and larger and by 10:30 Tom estimated the crowd to being anywhere from 10 to 15 thousand. Tom had by that time moved from the front of the line of march to the middle. As the crowd increased Tom noticed that the atmosphere was more in the nature of the carnival and that there was many young males either acting and smelling as if they had been drinking

109

J.P. – 2

By (illegible) the marchers had swelled to anywhere from 20 to 30 thousand and people by Tom's estimates (illegible) was needed for the march to begin (illegible) of Rev. King from Clayborn Temple. Around 11:15 King arrived and the march began with Tom being in around the middle of the marching line. Everything was peaceful at the start of the march, but (illegible) Tom's opinion, as soon as the middle of the line turned up Beale street some marchers closes to stores began breaking windows with the sticks that held their protest signs, at this point most of the march leaders were (illegible) at the front of the march and they hadn't realized what was happening. The march continued to move and windows was constantly being broken by the marchers that were in the middle of the march line. When the window breakers reached Pape's Clothing Store looting began. This looting rapidly spreaded [sic] to of the clothing stores and shops on Beale Street.

The line of march was continuing to move and Tom had reached Main Street and so had the looting and window breaking.

110

J.P. – 3

(illegible) march leaders realized what was happening and they immediately ordered the marchers to turn and go back to the march headquarters. When the marchers (illegible) moved back to Beale they was [sic] blocked by some of the marchers that was already on Beale looting looting looting stores. Confusion set in and when the marchers began to ignore the march leaders request to go back to the headquarters police moved in swinging sticks and spraying tear gas (illegible) some people returned with bricks, sticks and battles. Other continued to loot. Beale turned into open battle between young marchers and the police. Hate and anger was on both sides for the first time in Memphis black people struck blow for blow with the police. The police showed extreme anger and ugliness [sic] exemplified by the many over beating of young people and the hitting of a few old people. One example was the continued beating of a already unconscious young man by a group of police shown on national television. By 12:30 Tom left the downtown scene of the riot.

111

J.P. – 4

at about 3 o'clock I personally witnessed brick throwing at cars driven by white people. This took place on Mississippi and Walker bricks was [sic] thrown at busses and one man's car windows was smashed and his face was blooded when he tried to protest the bricking of his car. In my neighborhood all of the white stores windows were smashed on Porter and looting occurred at the cleaners on Porter. I heard no gun shots during the riots and saw only three firebombs explode and they were in the housing projects garbage cans. This concludes my personal report on the Memphis riot.

112

P.W. -1

What a weekend!

It all started with a march on Memphis led by Dr. Martin L. King Thursday March 28, 1968, approximately 11 a.m. I did not participate in the march but from an interview with Mrs. J. J. Johns of 980 Getaway, I learned of sum [sic] of the horrible incidents that she was an eyewitness to that day. I was an eyewitness to uses of police brutality throughout the rest of the weekend.

Mrs. Johns was a traffic director until March 28, 1968, when she was so scared on the job that she went home and phoned in to resign. After resigning she went to the Clayborn Temple where thousands of people were waiting to march on Memphis for the sanitation workers and other things that the Negro people of Memphis want. As stated by Mrs. Johns "The march started out to be a very peaceful act, I was just about in the middle of the long procession. We had reached Beale and Second when we were told to turn back. Naturally, we wanted to know why but we could hear screams from up ahead and windows breaking. I saw the fellows breaking the windows of Pape's and taking clothing out. These did not at all look like school boys, but like "Thugs". We never pushed back in such a

1

P.W. -2

Hurry and people were running and screaming so, that I was pushed into a café. Looking out for 2 or 3 minutes I saw policemen swinging long clubs and spraying tear gas, and we closed the door. Later a man opened the door to look out, a policeman's club hit him in the back of the head and burst his head. Blood shot in all directions; the police kept swinging and never looked back. They were hitting old and young, innocent and guilty, using profanity to their utmost to women, children or anyone else; they didn't care. When we finally got out of the café, the man who was hit was telling the police what happened, and one said, "Go swear out a warrant against the whole damn police station," and they all laughed. Tear gas on Beale Street was like a cloud of smoke. I made my way home in a flash and I hope I never live through anything like this again.

Mrs. John's daughter, Jane, age 17, was lost from her mother during the confusion. She was told to go back to the church. She told me, "He went back to the church and it was filled with tear gas. I couldn't stay there. Somehow I made my way through the crowd and came home."

2

P.W. -3

Mr. John Doe, age 21, of 376 Run Fast St. said, "at Vance and Butler the fellows were attacking the police, naturally they fought back. In most instances the police were taking advantage of people because they thought they were marchers. They were making people go inside off of their own porches and using profanity in all instances.

I saw a group of young men passing through the park with pants which I know cost \$30 a pair and each one had several pairs. One boy had one shoe and I asked where they had come from. He said, "they were looting on Beale St. When I asked why, he told me "It's not that I need these things; it's just that I get a good feeling taking something from the white man, I mean any white man, which I feel has taken from my race. See this one shoe; he's lost something, and I've gained it, one shoe."

Thursday ended with a curfew for the weekend from 7:00 p.m. until 5:00 a.m., set by the "great" Mayor Loeb, who started the whole mess. All types of law enforcement agencies were called into the city. Violation of the curfew was supposedly punishable by arrest; but, from many reports and from what I saw, Morris' boys, these Southern, rednecked [sic] white helmeted, cowardly semi-klansmen [sic], honkes [sic] which we call the State Troopers asked no questions but severely beat anyone they saw on the streets.

3

P.W. - 4

Cannot read...

4.

P.W. -5

Absent.

5

P.W. - 6

From there. They waited until they did, then left. Saturday, while driving around the city, I saw national guards in green uniforms with bayonets on their guns, guarding streets and business places.

Everything was quiet Sunday; Monday morning at approximately 9:15 a.m. I entered Jimmie Chris Grocery at the corner of Walker and Neptune with a friend. The windows were boarded, there was no glass, and no customers other than my friend and I. Jimmie and his wife looked angry but he faked a smile anyway. Then he said, "This is bad. These people wrong. Shouldn't do this to all people; if mad at some, go to some, not to all."

Yes, this has been a weekend to remember and I mean, "What a weekend!!!"

6

E.J. -1

Riot Memphis, Tenn.

To assist in the investigation of the Memphis riot I investigated several on the scene, witnesses. To begin with there were many accusations of police brutality. One of the instances of this case was the beating of a six year old negro youth by eight or more policemen. Further investigation of the case showed that the boy was cussing and shouting all types of obscenities to the policemen. But says [sic] witnesses, "that was little reason to beat the boy in such a manner."

Another instance of this nature was the policeman's [sic] use of tear gas. One witness, who also termed himself a victim, recollected that he was inside the church, "Clayborn Temple," into which policemen shot gas and then held the doors. The witness commented, "Why they shot gas into the church I'll never know."

There has been an accusation that the reverend King is to blame for the violence and destruction in the streets. However upon interviewing some of the looters themselves I found that many of these were just [gets cut off at the bottom].

1

E.J. -2

[...] were just waiting for such an incident as the strike and march as a purpose for looting.

2

P.H. -1

The Mass March last Thursday, which was led by the prominent civil rights leader, Dr. Martin Luther King along with other supporters of the Sanitation Workers Strike ended in turmoil and mob violence.

It all started about 11 o'clock A.M. As a participant in the March, [sic] I consider my account of major events as valid.

I shall list these events as I saw them happen:

The large crowd of approximately two thousand strong began slowly walking toward Beale Street from Clayborn Temple. Ministers and other march leaders were passing the word to "keep plenty of space between lines to make us look larger."

1

P.H. -2

Being somewhere in the middle of the crowd, I could not see how the end of the front looked but as I was told, the leaders, including Dr. King and his close associates, had proceeded up Beale Street and had turned right on Main Street as far as Haverty's Furniture Store when the "beginning of the end" of the march started.

It appeared to me that a group of about 25 or 30 outsiders, mainly teenagers not participating in the march, came into the crowd and began breaking windows in stores along Beale Street near Handy Park. They used bricks, sticks, and bottles. They entered the stores and

2

P.H. -3

began pilfering all they thought they could use. Mainly concerned with themselves, the looters got what they could and began running away from the main body of marchers.

When the ministers on the side line became aware of what was happening, they told us all to “turn around and go back to the Temple.” “We can’t go on if they’re going to break windows.”

Excited, afraid, and panicky could describe the crowd’s reactions. Everyone began running.

The police had so far restrained themselves from interfering with us, but at this time they began using force to handle the mass crowd of approximately 99% Negroes. I saw two of the “brutes”

3

P.H. -4

Absent

P.H. -5

The church and began throwing the mace bombs. [It all] seemed inhuman to me, but who was I to be the judge.

The march ended unfortunately and unsuccessfully, but it was not a sign that a non-violent march is impossible. Dr. King is determined to prove that a non-violent march can be conducted and carried out successfully.

I was overwhelmed to see the large number of participants in the march. They were of all ages. Practically all wore signs sympathizing [sic] the Sanitation Workers’ spirit.

I guess one bad deed deserved another, because throughout the remainder of the day outbursts of violence were all kinds, fires, injuries, and brutality characterized the day.

I think that day in March will always be remembered.

5

D.B. -1

I arrived at Clayborn Temple at about 8:50 a.m. because I thought that the march was scheduled to start at 9:00 a.m. However, when I got my sign reading, “Mace Won’t Stop the Truth,” I joined the marchers already waiting in the streets. As I walked along looking for a place for me, my sister, Thinkel and my friend Barbara Partee, I could see that everyone possessed a certain kind of enthusiasm. From the talking, laughing, and waves given by people to familiar friends or acquaintances, it made me feel that this really was a “holiday march.” As I walked along, I began reading some of the signs that ranged from “I Am a Man,” to “Loeb, kiss my Ass.” After walking for about 5 minutes, I found a spot about mid-way in the march. When we first squeezed into the crowd, I said that this was an ideal position because if anything started at the beginning or the end, maybe we would have a chance to get away quickly. While standing there in the march looking around, I could see the age level ranged from a baby in a carriage to an elderly lady of about 65.

1

D.B. -2

I laughed and said to my sister and Barbara that no one wanted to be left out of the parade. As we stood there, we learned that the march would not leave Clayborn Temple until about 10:30 a.m. or 11:00 a.m. For various moments there would be a certain kind of quietness present. At about 9:30 a.m. the whirlybirds (about 3) that were flying over the march area were beginning to irritate the marchers. The teen-agers from the high school areas began to make up various chants concerning Loeb. However, each time the whirlybirds would come in close, everyone seemed to become angry and thus the whole crowd began to hold their individual signs up and make geering [sic] remarks. I must even admit that the whirlybirds were causing me to become frustrated, because it seemed as though we were in a cage with guardsmen flying over us to keep watch. At about 10:10 a.m. the marchers began to get very restless. The teen-agers began to sit in the middle of the street and some of the adults went to the church to sit down, I noticed that the longer we waited, the tension was mounting higher and higher. As I began to look around in front of me, I could

D.B. -3

See what appeared to be a large branch with a sign hanging from it held by one fellow and was surrounded by a group.

With the wind blowing, I could not read the sign and I said to myself jokingly that maybe they had run out of sticks. Suddenly, the [bay] who was holding the branch with a sign on it was above the crowd saying ironically and sarcastically there would be no violence. Everyone that heard him, laughed because you could easily tell that his tone was not a serious one. As he continued to repeat the same thing over again, the writing on his sign finally came into view that read "Loeb's Hanging Tree." A sudden chill ran through me because for the first time, I began to feel that this would not be a peaceful march. At 11:00 a.m., the marchers began to move on to their destination, City Hall. When the march started moving, I was disappointed because my idea of a march was destroyed. The people were just walking without any type of form. The people kept yelling for everyone to get in one

3

D.B. -4

File and hold hands, but the people ignored this plea. I also noticed that half of the marchers near me were not holding their signs up. As a matter of fact, I noticed that two of the marchers near me (teen-agers) were holding just their sticks and had torn off their signs. When they held them up, I could see that the stick had writing that read "Black Power Stick." The immediate thought that passed through my mind was- What am I doing in this march? The march was moving slowly for about 5 minutes and I could see that a lot of people were standing on the sidewalks looking at us as if it were a parade going along. Suddenly, as I looked to my left, I saw about five men walking with sticks in their hands saying that we [the marchers] didn't want any violence, but we were going to get some. I thought about what they were saying but I didn't heed it because they were walking fast and I thought that maybe one of the parade marshalls [sic] would stop them in time. As the march turned on Beale Street, the crowd was changing moods. I noticed that hatred was present on the faces of many. I also noticed that they were

4

D.B. -5

Getting angry because [...] policemen lined up and down the [...] I knew then that the march would end in violence. I had just reached Beale and Third when some of the marchers had turned around and saying [sic] for everybody to go back to the church. This really set the first spark for violence. A few of the militant marchers present were saying no, don't turn around, keep marching. I suddenly realized that I didn't know which to do. I had a series of mixed emotions. After my sister told me that she was going on, I decided that I would march on to [sic]. About 3 minutes later, I heard breaking of windows and I noticed that some of the crowd started to run. I headed toward a street that was lined with policemen [about 8] and for a few minutes, panick [sic] overtook them because they started running away from the crowd and

5

D.B. -6

I noticed then that one of them stopped and put his hand on his gun as if to say "What am I running for, I have a gun." He then stopped and started back toward Beale and the other policemen that were running stopped and pulled their guns and started going back toward the scene of the violence. As I was running, I noticed that I had left my sister and I called to Barbara and told her I had to go back. As we arrived back on Beale, I saw my sister still standing and looking. Suddenly, I noticed that the violence seemed to die down but I heard a voice coming from someone who I knew quite well. I will call him Ray Richardson because he is a Senior at Le Moyne College. He was carrying a stick saying "Everybody that's scared, get behind me and run." Then everything started again. This time I noticed that the stores were being looted an glasses were breaking. My sister and I started running once again. When we got a few feet from Beale, I looked back and I could see the police riding down Beale at about 70 m.p.h. I could also see policemen running with their guns in one hand and stick in the other one. Fear overtook me and I was trying to find a way home. As I looked around hoping that the violence had stepped and Beale, I saw a policeman beat a man until he fell and balled up as if lurching in great pain. I also noticed that about three or four policemen ran from their position to get a lick in on the man who was already down. I began to cry and wonder how could something like this happen in Memphis. As the three of us started walking back toward Beale, I stopped and said that we couldn't go because I showed them the fumes from mace and tear gas.

6

D.B. -7

However, it was too late to stop. Our eyes began to burn and water. Just as I started feeling sorry for myself, I saw a man coming up the street with his shirt off holding it up to his head. His face was covered with blood and his under-

shirt was soaked. His shirt seemed so saturated until it seemed as though you could wring the blood out of it. I began to cry because I thought that this was the worst thing that I could see. He stopped a car that was passing by. He didn't know the driver or any of the passengers but he asked them to take him to the hospital, I then made my desperate plea for us to try to get home. As we started walking back towards Beale, the various T.U. reporters passed us zooming as if they were in a squad car. We finally made it to Vance Avenue and I said that the buses were passing people up and that we could go to my grandfather's tailoring shop [BHS Custom Tailors] and wait there until he could take us home. As we started walking near Vance and Third where his shop was located, we passed a [Loeb L. Barb-O] with two squad cars of policemen with helmets standing in front and were saying that they should get into their cars and see what the other guys

7

D.B. -8

Were doing. We knew that he was referring to the other policemen. From listening to him, I felt hard and bitter because I knew that more men like him were down on Beale beating my people and getting sheer enjoyment from beating people. However, we finally made it to our grandfather's shop safely and we stayed there until about 4:00 p.m. When I got home, I learned that my brothers had to run home from Cummings Elementary School because rioters were threatening the school. I also learned then that Memphis would have a curfew from 7:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. At about 6:55 p.m. the residents on McLemore that level in the apartments between Neptune and College lined the streets as if expecting a parade to come along. Suddenly, we heard glass breaking and it was coming from Friedman's Furniture Store. I opened my mouth in amazement because people began to run up the street with couches, televisions, rugs, and etc. Everyone still stood there and from no where [sic] about 6 squad cars and five state troopers' cars drove up and shouted for us to get in the house. A lot of the fellows who had broken glass run [sic] into an apartment. The policemen and State Troopers stayed for about 10 minutes and then everyone came back on the streets.

8

D.B. -9

Some fellows who drove up in a car bearing Mississippi license plates came and asked the people if they had any gasoline or firecrackers because they wanted to burn down Big "O" Food Store. My father then told us to stay near the door because he didn't want anything to happen to us. At about 8:00 p.m. I thought that maybe the idea of burning Big "O" Food Store was dead when there was a loud boom and saw a bright light come from the back of the store. The people in my apartment session cheered and then went into the house as if nothing had happened. About 10 minutes later we heard the fire department and ran outside to see what was happening as if we were really shocked. After they put the fire out, they left one policeman there, but he soon left in a hurry because somebody shot at him. At about 10:00 p.m. the owner of the store came with about four other friends or relatives who entered the store with rifles to guard it. This set off a spark with the people around us. About three doors down from us, the tenants began to throw bricks and bottles at the store window. I was then told to go into the house and so the only thing that I can say is that they eventually broke the window because the next morning I saw them getting glass

9

D.B. -10

Installed. I will let my report end here because I feel that the other incidents that I witnessed are too lengthy to put in this one paper, but I would like to say that this was only a sample of the worst that is about to come.

10

D.B.-11

"My Personal Viewpoint"

I feel that the risk that took place on Thursday, March 28, 1968, was inevitable. The reason that I could give for feeling like this was the controversial issue of police brutality. This was what people thought would start the riot in Memphis. However, a riot did not occur and therefore the tension and reasons for a riot mounted. I feel that when Mayor Henry Loeb was elected to office that many "Black Power" groups organized because the black people of Memphis knew that they had a prejudice [sic] mayor in office. Because of his handling of the sanitation strike and the police brutality issues from last year, indicated a way out. It was not only a march for the strikers, but it was also a march for long last justice towards blacks in Memphis. I feel, however, that the march and riot didn't accomplish too much but it illustrat-

ed to the notion and to the citizens of Memphis that justice and equality must prevail. I would also like to say that I feel that the rioting was already planned. As I can recall from the march, I remember seeing a group of fellows with the "Invaders" written across the backs of their jackets. I also remember that when the march started that they said "all right, let's spread out." I also think that they were the main one that started breaking the glass and other people

11

D.B. -12

Just joined in with them at that moment. As has already been stated, no one actually knows what happened but can only tell what they saw. I think the only way to solve this mystery would be to talk with a member of "The Invader."

12

G.R. -1

Abusive, insulting language and brutality by Policeman [sic], and looting by teenagers ran rampant in the city of Memphis on March 28, 1968.

Sometime between 11:30 A.M. and 12:30 P.M. a Negro protest march was proceeding up Beale Street to Main Street when teenagers and young adults started breaking windows, the marchers were instructed by Mr. Jesse Turner, President of the Memphis [sic] of the N.A.A.C.P. to turn around and march back to the church on Hernando Street because of the rioting and looting. I turned to march back to the church, but seeing the long line of people behind me and hearing the breaking of windows and with sticks and rocks flying through the air, I decided to break from the crowd and go up McCall Street. Some of my friends and I crossed Main Street and started up McCall where we were confronted by police officers and told to "get on back down there gals." We tried to explain to the officers that we wanted no part of the violence that was going on down on Main Street.

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G.R. -2

I could see sticks and rocks flying through the air. At this time the police officers ran past [sic] us and toward the crowd and we turned and ran to a priest who was standing by a car across the street, who escorted us to Front Street.

In interviews with several people who remained with the marchers, I was able to secure the following account of what happened.

A Mr. James Jones stated that he was standing by his place of business on Beale Street after the street was practically cleared when a policeman told him to "get your damn black ass off the street." When he replied to the officer that his abusive language was no necessary, he was knocked to the ground by this officer and joined by three more officers who beat him.

Riding in an ambulance behind the march was Dr. W.E. Smith who stated that he observed a young man who took a stick and broke the window in a liquor store.

2

G.R. -3

He and other teenagers started taking liquor from the stores across the street he saw the police beating a man who was in front of his store. He beat the man, pushing him back into his store finally knocking him to the floor; while young adults were running in and out of the store with merchandise.

The destructive action and the looting that took place on that Thursday cannot be condoned by any law abiding citizen. The question remaining, is why did it happen? The news media would lead one to believe that Dr. King and the other leaders of the march were responsible, saying that they deserted the march. This statement is untrue. Dr. King and the other ministers were never actively leading the march. Teenagers were running along the sidewalk and in front of the leaders. Dr. King and the ministers did what any law abiding citizen would have done when violence erupted. The answer to why this riot occurred, I think, can be found in the denial of basic [working] request of the sanitation workers,

3

G.R. - 4

The many underlying grievances in the Negro community and the general mistrust Negroes have for whites. All of these factors precipitated an atmosphere [sic] of tension which resulted in violence.

The abusive language and brutality of the policeman were uncalled for. I have concluded that the policemen for the most part are a group of racist [sic] and cowards. The insulting language used was not necessary and would not have been used on any other race. The brutality was never committed by one officer alone. It was always two or three in a group beating one unarmed person. I feel that if any one answer could be attributed as a cause of the riot, it would have to be the feeling of resentment and mistrust from both sides.

4

R.L.J. -1

My Interview with a Participant in the March

The march reached Lowerstein's department store when ministers and nuns began asking the marchers to go back to Clayborn Temple. The policeman started beating people. They beat an old man mercilessly. The policemen did not endeavor stopping the looting on Beale Street but when the riot got to Main Street, the police shot in the air. Witnesses stated a sixteen year old boy was shot while his hands were up. Some people were sprayed by tear gas while sitting on their porches.

Black power advocates were influential [sic] in inciting [sic] the riot. The rioters seemed to have certain stores that they looted. As a result of the riot, there was a seven o'clock curfew enforced in Memphis for four days. The sanitation workers are still marching, this causes the stores downtown, to lose thousands of dollars daily.

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R.L.J. -2

The march for the sanitation workers began around 9:00 o'clock. The approximate number of marchers numbered one-thousand. Before the marchers could get on Main Street, the marchers were turned around because high school students started rioting, they threw rocks and bricks in the department store windows. There was an estimate of \$400,000 damage. The merchants on Beale Street suffered the most damage because nearly all of the white establishments were looted.

One can go on Beale Street today and find one-third of the store windows boarded up because of the riot. Some of the articles that were stolen were guitars, radios, suits, watches, etc. I talked to two of my colleagues and they told me that they were downtown Thursday, March 29 when it happened. They were victims of the tear-gas spraying.

The rioting was believed to have hurt the Negro cause rather than help it because it produced killing, the entrance of national guardmen [sic] and all of this has not made Mr. Loeb compromise and give the sanitation workers more money.

2

C.A. -1

Now Memphis Has Had A Riot

My account of the riot was taken from two people, my brother and a friend.

My brother's viewpoint:

The downtown riot was an extremely disgusting incident. It most definitely had to be planned, and most of the looters were youths. Among the youth were seen many familiar faces. The youths had apparently been standing in alleys, inside of buildings, and within the march awaiting their chance to begin. It was when policemen started shoving members of the march off of the sidewalks and into the streets, that the actual fighting started. With the hurling, shoving, and passing of blows that the pathway to violence and destruction was opened. For a moment, my brother said he was dazed. His friends and others started having a field day. They broke out windows, started removing clothing, liquor shoes, and anything else they

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C.A. -2

Could get their hands on.

My friends [sic] viewpoint.

On Mississippi Ave, my friend said that Loeb a enterprises were the main objectives of their group. The broke out windows, ran a patron away, and took over the sandwich distribution. The carried away pork shoulders and anything else that they wanted. In the meantime, the waitress abandoned the establishment.

2

V.J. -1

My Views On the "Riot"

Many people are writing about [...] incidents, and statements in defense of the riot, its [...]. But my views are just the opposite, or shall we say of another nature.

I will first say that the entire movement has my support. I was not in the downtown march Thurs, [sic] but I was told of many cruel things which policemen did that were unjust. But my incident concerns the crime of looting. I prefer not to mention correct names because of family ties involved.

A close in law of mine called to tell me that her brother Herron had "half of Pape's Men Store" at home on the bed. Herron had had been in jail once for forgery and is always involved in something crooked. This is why I say it was a crime. He went down to the march looking for something to happen and another chance to loot and steal.

The unfortunate part of it is his sister and mother seem to think nothing of it and they are considered to be most respectable people in the neighborhood. His sister Brenda could be laughing about the loot he had collected, which consisted of some 22 sweaters (\$30 + up each), 30 shirts, a bolt of men's suit material and shoes. I think that things like this really defeat our overall purpose and strives in the movement, It is shameful to know that there are people who are just waiting on violence and disturbances to occur for their own personal gain.

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V.S. -1

After talking with a few of the people who participated in the march last Thursday, I came to the conclusion that Memphis police used crucial and inhumane treatment with two persons, one of which was attacked and beaten unmercifully. This is the way he related to me.

He had decided to leave the march and returned to his car. At this time, quite a bit of action was still going on downtown, such as breaking windows and looting, with the police using all types of actions to restore law and order. While he was driving back to his place of business, he noticed a group of Negro women being questioned by

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V.S. -2

The police.

At [this] time, the [women] were in their own front yards. The police were kicking them, beating them with sticks and using very abusive language. He stopped and asked the police why they were not downtown [during] their duty instead of taking it out on a group of poor, defenseless women. The police told him to mind his own business, because today they were going to beat as many niggers as they possibly could.

After this remark they turned on him and started beating and kicking him because of his inquiry about the ladies. Fortunately, he did not have

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V.S. -3

To be hospitalized but he did require medical attention. He happens to be the owner of a large business here in Memphis and [plane] are presently being made to do something about this act of violence.

The other person, with whom I talked, is a senior in high school. She was standing with a group of students waiting

for the person who had made their posters to arrive. At this time they were quite orderly. Police approached them and said, "Niggers get off the streets or take what we have for you." The students were explaining why they were there,

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V.S. -4

But before they could finish, they were being sprayed on their faces.

In my opinion, neither if these actions was [sic] necessary. It is very sad though, that nothing probably will be done about either. In a sense, it seems that the police were taking advantage of the disorder in order to receive personal satisfaction. Since this may never be proved to be correct, many of the incidents of that day will go unnoticed and the guilty will not be punished.

4

B.S. -1

The Riot in Memphis

The march to help the Sanitation workers began at about 11:30. A friend, whom I will call Miss X told me her experiences. Miss X was understanding in Handy Park waiting for the march to begin. A truck passed with a loud speaker attached, which told the people to stop standing around, and join the march. This aroused many people to start out before the march had begun. This was the first mistake made, she felt.

After the march had begun many windows were broken. Miss X felt this must have been planned because only specific stones were hit. The police saw the looting on Beale Street, but made no attempt to stop it.

When the march got to Main

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B.S. -2

Street Miss X got as far as Peril and Lowenstein. The police then began shooting up in the air to turn back the march. The crowd scattered and began throw bricks [sic] and rocks in the windows. The police reacted by using Mase [sic] to stop the crowd.

The ministers then told everyone to return to the Temple. The police had the streets blocked and were using their billy [sic] clubs on the marchers. When Miss X got off of Main she went back to the Temple, and found the police were using Mase [sic] in the Temple.

2

A.A. -1

A Trying Time For a Tired People

The situation which is now taking place in the city of Memphis should be the concern of the whole city. The situation is the striking of the sanitation workers, whose main issue of the strike is for a dues check off.

For eight weeks the stickers have been marching peacefully down main unnoticed. At first they were noticed, but after several weeks of this marching they were considered just part of the scenery. Then a mass march was scheduled and violence accomplished a great deal. The boycott on the major businesses around the city was kept by some, but not all. After the riot, the people were to [sic] scared to go into these businesses. This kept the boycott on tighter and in the long run the businesses would lose money. After this economic

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A.A. -2

Loss the businessmen would feel the pinch on their pocketbooks and thus pressure the Councilmen for a settlement.

The strike, riot, and boycott has brought the Negro community together. It has taught the Negro here in Memphis how to stick together for a good cause. This cause is for better jobs, housing, and opportunities for my people. We want

action now, not later because now is the time for change. The now generating won't take all of this monkey business from the whites anymore.

If rioting is the only way or answer to the problems of the black man, the riot. It's time the whites wake up before it's to [sic] late for the blacks and whites of this country.

2

J.T. -1

Highlights Concerning the "Riot" in Memphis

As a result of interviews with various persons, I was able to obtain much information concerning the recent riot in Memphis.

For example, an interview with Mr. A. one of the strikers who participated in the march demonstration on Thursday April 28, 1968, [recalled- ?] the following"

"The riot really started before the march," exclaimed Mr. A. "There were a group of teenagers standing at the corner of Linden and Hernando near a liquor store. They began by attacking busses with bricks and sticks. The liquor store close [sic] as a result of the disturbance. They had previously refused to serve the teenagers. The youngsters broke into the store and helped themselves."

These youngsters, according to Mr. A. did not participate in the march. Even though

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J.T. -2

They were [...] to clear the sidewalk and [...] the march, they refused.

Mr. A. continued: "After the march [...] we had not gone very far before someone ordered us to turn back. We immediately turned back to the church on Hernando where the march had begun. Policemen sprayed mace in the church yard. They did not spray it directly inside the church. It circulated inside."

"Later, around 2:30 p.m. I saw policemen but two teenagers on [...] over and leave them lying on the ground. Bystanders took one of the teenage boys upstairs in one of the building [sic] and later on an ambulance came and took him away. Policemen were running people off the street in the area. Some of the people ran in a house on [...]; some went around the house. The policemen sprayed mace in the house and those persons who were caught were beaten. All of this took place at approximately 2:30 or 3:00 P.M. I didn't see them beat [my-?] adult,

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J.T. -3

But I saw them whip many teenagers. They made me get off the street, but they didn't beat me."

Mr. B. a demonstrator and businessman, gave his account of the incident.

"I was on the tail end of the march when we got to Hernando and Beale there was a commotion at Beale and Maine [sic] St. We were signaled to turn back. I went back to work. From there I saw a youngster running down the street with an arm of liquor. He gave two bottles to a woman on the sidewalk. Policemen were riding at least six to a car. Some disturbances took place at Vance Ave. and Hernado. Policemen arrived on the scene and the crowd dispersed. There was one youngster who [...] from [...] the spot where disturbance had taken place. I saw a group of policemen beat this boy unmercifully. The boy's face was red and a puddle of blood stood in the street. Two of them picked him up and threw him across the hood of the car and hit him two more times as they proceeded to slash him. It took nineteen in his head [sic] stitches as a

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J.T. -4

Result of the incident.

Afterward [illegible] part before before to break glasses along Vance. I feel that this was done through [illegible] po-

liceman beat the other youngster. A police car passed but they made an effort to stop the youngsters. Apparently they called for help because soon there were about fifteen cars then.

“One policeman also shot six times as a youngster ran down the street. However, I don’t believe he tried to hit him.”

Mr. B. also had this to say: “I believe that many of the rioters were from out of town. There were a lot of strange faces.”

Still another eye witness gave her account. “It was about 6:31 P.M. on Thursday. Teenagers and young adults were breaking windows along [illegible] Lemore. Policemen rushed in, about fifteen cars and the chief, and ordered people off

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J.T. -5

The [illegible]

Although I saw none of these incidents, my personal belief is that the demonstrators had no part in the riot. Possibly others took advantage of the demonstration for their own personal gain; that is, to [illegible] as they did on Beale Avenue. However, according to Mr. X, a businessman, all the looting were [sic] not done by rioters. He said that one of his employees declared that he saw policemen looting a liquor store that had been broken into earlier by teenagers.

I also feel that after those on the side line, who took advantage of the demonstration, started rioting and looting and policemen before to heated people some feasibly innocent, others were [illegible] to angry and retaliated by rioting. The Vance ave. [sic] account of the youngster who received such a beating is an example.

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R.W. -1

[Illegible] better than the other fellow. This combination should not be stifled, for stifling this urge lessens the man and creates future problems. Somewhere in the saga of the American Negro his desire for pride and dignity had been discouraged and he felt himself a “little man.” But society does not recognize little men, if anything society pities them, even misuse them. If society doesn’t pity them, it use [sic] them to its own advantage. Such was the case involving hundreds of Negroes in Memphis, Tennessee.

During the latter part of last week, March 28-31, in an instant, a fairly orderly demonstration in support of the sanitation strike molded into a vast outbreak of looting and rioting, bloodshed and vandalism. Most of the Beale Street area and the southwestern part of Memphis were under martial law after firemen, policemen, state troopers and National Guardsmen were called in to snuff out the agitation.

As the march was in its procession, there were many Negroes, mostly youths, gathering together to seek revenge

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R.W. -2

from policemen after an incident that occurred at Hamilton High School. I arrived around 11:15 A.M., a little to [sic] late to join the head of the demonstration, but as I approached the rear of the march there were policemen clubbing and cursing young Negro youths for nothing more than screaming “Black Power.”

Most observers agreed that the violence started when hundreds of Negro youths broke away from the main body of marchers on Beale Street Thursday and started breaking windows and looting. This could have been the firearm for this violent outbreak. But the inhuman [sic] treatment administered by police officers of clubbing and cursing Negro youths is the more probable reason for what happened. This even set off a twelve hour period of violence that witnessed one Negro youth murdered by a white policeman, who upon this day has not been brought to justice, many people hurt and over 200 arrested. As the rioting continued over a great part of the Memphis area, fires were set, windows broken, bombs tossed, and firemen, policemen, and National Guardsmen were continuously plagued with the trouble.

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R.W. -3

Dr. Martin [illegible] who's guidance and procedures the [illegible] supposedly [sic] to have followed, had earlier advocated complete work stoppage by the Memphis Negro community and suggested all Negro students to disregard classes Thursday in order to conduct a symbolic nonviolent march in the downtown area.

Negro student played truant by the hundreds and were joined by many other young Negro youths who turned the peaceful demonstration into a tumult that left Beale Street in total destruction. Because of the trouble that had already occurred before he arrive, Dr. King could not have been the instigator [sic] of the Memphis riot by which he has been accused by Memphis racist news media. His sympathy march for the sanitation workers was just a handy excuse for something that was bound to happen. For a long time Memphis has been living on the mythical creed of complete cooperation between the races (black and white) that just simply wasn't true. Such incidents as the looting of Sears on Third Street and the looting of Pico [sic] Furniture and Appliance on Lauderdale was something inevitable. I also feel that the Memphis riot was not a racial crisis as such (by

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R.W. -4

Racial crisis I mean an all out black vs. white) but more of a revenge of the Negro youths against police brutality and the Memphis merchants.

Another cruel incident occurred in the neighborhood of Hughs [sic] and King Street in Southeast Memphis Friday March 29 at approximately 6:00 P.M. At the H-I hamburger stand on Hughs [sic] Street at 6:00 P.M. a state trooper car pulled up and ordered about twelve Negro youths to dissolve and go home. The youths moved along slowly much too slow for the state troopers satisfaction and thus fearing trouble from the youths, radioed for help. At approximately 6:15 P.M. ten more state troopers arrived, using profanity and "disorderly conduct," began clubbing and spraying mace at the youths, striking one young girl in the eyes and momentarily blinding her. Their conduct and language was totally unnecessary in talking to the youths. I feel that if the troopers knew exactly how to talk to them instead of saying "Niggers move on" like they usually do, there would have been better cooperation between the youths and the officers. Negro youths are not apt to be called "Niggers" or any other mispronounced enunciation of Negro by whites as their

4

R.W. -5

[Illegible] LeMoyné Incident a few weeks ago.

After this miraculous situation occurred, Mayor Loeb impended a curfew from 7 P.M. until 5 A.M. This curfew was supposedly meant for all citizens of Memphis but as later evidenced, it was only for Negro citizens mainly Negro youths.

5

B.H. -1

Current [Illegible] in Memphis

A march, a non-violent march, a riot, which was it suppose [sic] to be? What did it start as, and what did it end as? Did the march accomplish it's [sic] goals?

A non-violent march which was scheduled for Thursday, March 28, 1968 in support of the striking sanitation workers turned into an unexpected riot. The battles between the marchers and policemen in some cases were brutal. Those who survived the battles could be considered as the survival of the fittest.

According to an active participant in the march, the marchers began gathering at Clayborn Temple as early as 7:30 a.m. By the time the march got on the way, the marchers were in a state of tenseness and restlessness. The march began to progress down the street in an orderly fashion, then all of a sudden the marchers turned and started running in all directions. This participant saw an older man passing out sticks to youths, who immediately began breaking out store windows. After this participant saw that

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B.H. -2

There was going [illegible] trouble she and her companion decided to go to the "Big M," a night club on [illegible]. They had only been seated for an hour or so when the police came in and said, "All of you M.F get out of here right now." One fellow was walking too slow, so he was immediately beaten to the floor. According to this participant the police over reacted in some situations, People who weren't involved in the march were attacked by the police as well as those involved.

Another participant, who was arrested said that there were more injuries and arrests than the news medias reported. He said most of the injuries were head injuries apparently made by the night sticks of policemen. He reported to me that the court room was filled with quite a number of bloody Negroes, ranging [sic] from about 25 to 15 years or age.

My opinion of the march is that it

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B.H. -3

Was necessary, but it was carried out in the wrong way. By this I mean, their leader Martin Luther King had on objective in mind, but the people backing him had another objective in mind. These differences in objectives therefore resulted in violence and violence resulted to death. The march in itself I think was fine, but the after effects were not so fine. So the efforts of the march which turned into a riot did nothing but break laws, destroyed [sic] property, caused injuries and death, caused a curfew that damaged business profits, caused an over usage of police and National Guards, which will cause an increase in tax next year, and most of all it destroyed [sic] the goals of the march.

3

I.J.S. -1

My paper is an interview taken from perons [sic] who were on the scnee [sic] of the march when the riot erupted. I will use no names so as to avoid incriminating anyone.

The first person interviewed I will call, Mrs. Jane Doe. Mrs. Doe is a teacher with the Memphis City School System.

The second was Mr. John Doe a prominent Memphis Retired Man.

The following are their accounts and reason why they felt it necessary to march in the first place.

Mrs. Jane Doe's Interview

She States:

As the march began everything was peaceful, the people were in high spirit and very glad to see persons that they knew.

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I.J.S. -2

There were [illegible] to lose our jobs.

After arriving on the scene we spotted twenty other teachers. We were already carrying signs but we turned them over and on the clean side we wrote in lipstick Memphis City School Teachers. After raising [sic] the signs people began to shout out and cheer, we turned the signs around so that all could see them. The people were happy to see that teachers felt that this was their problem too and wanted to do something about it.

It was broadcasted that Martin Luther arrived at the airport at 10:20 and he rached the march around 11:00 a.m. When he arrived we never new [sic] he was there as far

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I.J.S. -3

As far as seeing him was concerned, but the persons in the front were all leading cheers and yelling as though there was a Pep Rally which gave us to know he was there.

As the march continued along we sighted people standing on the sidewalk. The march marshalls asked them to get off the sidewalks and into the streets but some of them insisted on being spectators.

While continuing to march you could see policemen blocking intersections so that traffic could not enter. They seemed very jolly as they stood conversing with each other.

By the time my section almost reached Main and Beale Streets, the people in front started running and hollering go back to the church. We stood still for awhile [sic] for the Marshalls had given us no signal. When it seemed almost like a stampede. We heard a window break and saw a group of boys running toward us. We began running too as we ran we heard

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I.J.S. -4

Windows breaking. No windows were broken before we [illegible] Main and Beale. The windows that were broken were done so while running back to the church. The boys were running and breaking windows as they went. The looting occurred after the windows were broken for when the police chased the boys who broke them and passed by the businesses other boys went in and looted them.

When we arrived back at the church we all went in and sat down. After a length [sic] of time more of the marchers returned and the church became crowded.

The people were naturally scared and there was quite a bit [sic] of noise. The police began to shoot [sic] tear gas into the church as more marches would arrive and the door would be opened to let them in the police would shoot in more tear gas.

Rev. Lawon tried to get the

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I.J.S. -5

People to [illegible] but women were looking for [illegible] from whom they had been separated and groups of people they had arrived with. There were shouts of hysteria and much crying but you couldn't possibly know whether the people were crying from being frightened or from tear gas.

After awhile [sic] Rev. Lawson went to call Police Chief Holloman and ask him to call off his men.

While we were still at the Clayborn Temple and the ministers were meeting with us, a group of people called "The Invaders" tried to take over the meeting by at intervals hollering out such things as "Black Power," "Suns and Bullets are what you need not peace."

One even went far enough to say "these ministers are going to cause you people to go straight to "Hell" because they aren't telling you the truth."

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I.J.S. -6

These persons called the Invaders wore naturals, black power emblems, around their necks, and what appeared to be Army fatigues jackets with either "Invaders" or "Black Power" on the back. These young men appeared to be between 19-22 years of age rather than high school students as was thought.

Mr. John Doe's Interview

Mr. Doe states that after the people were headed back to the church and windows were being broken and looting started, the policemen began to ask no questions only to hit the first person he came upon. It mattered not if you just happened to be hit. You had to run to get away without any injury. You weren't running from them because you had done something but because whether you did or not you knew the policemen would beat you as though you had.

6

I.J.S. -7

The policemen were beating little boys like they [illegible] men and anyone [illegible] was in the way.

Both Mrs. Jane Doe and Mr. John Doe felt that along with helping the Sanitation Workers, the march was for "Negro Rights." They stated that there were thousands of signs carried stating "I am a Man". They both felt that this was ridiculous to have to tell someone what they should already be able to see.

Mrs. Doe said, "Young people have read the Declaration of Independence that they are not free. The white man has set the stage for this play and the Negro's [sic] are just playing their parts. The white man could never understand what the Negro has had to confront, the only way he could understand is to be a Negro."

7

M.R. -1

Memphis Wake Up and [illegible]

My report is an interview with a young man on the scene. I chose to call him Sam Doe to avoid incriminating anyone and endangering him as well as myself.

On March 28, 1968 what began as a peaceful march at Beale and Hernando turned into a starting event which no one ever expected. As the march proceeded a group of well-known black power advocates charged ahead and began smashing windows of many famous stores.

The march continued on the Main Street and it was here that the police began to strike the crowd with their billies [sic], and as could be expected the group retaliated. The marchers proceeded to Goldsmith's where the police forced them to make an about face turn.

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M.R. -2

The group did so, and about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the group turned down Second, little did they know what would happen ahead. A police helicopter had notified the police and here they headed the group off with tear gas.

With this, the group returned to their headquarters, Claybourne [sic] Temple where they were still followed by police and again tear gased [sic]; to complete the action many of the police jumped on people as they came out of the church.

Upon returning home, I found that action was still occurring. At Pic's Furn Company a group of young militants were attempting to destroy it. Since not a window was broken, the job was difficult; so to alleviate this, one of them kicked the window enough to cause it to crack; the rest proceeded from there.

2

M.R. -3

Upon securing illegal entry they stole everything they could get away with all [illegible] they either threw in the street or destroyed. One of the militants did destroy one of the T.V's by completely kicking the inside out.

Not far away from this scene a laundry cleaners was being victimized. The crowd was taking the cleaners for everything they could, an [sic] a dull male even went as far as to drive his car in and drive off with two car-loads of clothes from the cleaners.

If it had not been for the young militants and black power advocates on the scene, the looting and rioting would not have even occurred. What caused a labor dispute to turn into a racial dispute is still a mystery.

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M.R. -4

My personal feelings (M.R.) is that Memphis has [illegible] and has been fooling herself regarding the race relations in

the city. The fact is that Memphis Negroes had never united together; the majority of the race had simply kept quiet and watched as they were being trampled on. Then too maybe they were waiting for the right time and circumstances.

But now Memphis the so-called city of Good [Illegible] has turned into anything but, the big question is WHY?. Memphis had better wake up before she finds herself in a situation which will be too difficult for her to solve, because she has fooled herself so long that it's impossible for her to see where she's headed.

I whole-heartedly support the

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M.R. - 5

Labor dispute between the sanitation workers and the city, for I strongly feel that if the government heads of Memphis can pay for extra police protection, they can just as easily pay the sanitation workers which would be less than they pay for police protection. It's true that we need police protection, but we also need a clean city, so why not pay the people who clean your city like you pay those who protect it?

I think Memphis should re-examine her ideals and intentions and decide what to do before it's too late.

The question I present Memphis is simply- Are You Ready? If not you had better, because one day when you wake up you won't have a city. Memphis, wake up so you can live.

5

C.H. -1

[Illegible]

1

C.H. -2

[Illegible]

2

C.H. -3

[Illegible]

3

C.H. -4

[Illegible]

4

C.H. -5

Going to [illegible] if in our effort to get [illegible] people began to throw bricks at the police. They then shot a tear-gas bomb and we began to run again.

When we go on 3rd Street we stopped so that the rest of the people who came to the church with us could catch up so that we could all leave together. Out of ten only five of us were together. As we waited on Third Street we saw the police brutally beat a senior from the high school that my brother attends.

In about five minutes we saw many people carrying clothes, guitars, radios, cameras and bolts of material. This of course was wrong but at the time it just didn't seem so bad. Please don't misunderstand. I'm not

5

C.H. -6

Condoning looting and destruction of property, it's just that at the time I was [illegible] my safety and the safety of my

friends, than about the looting.

Before the other half of our party reached us, the crowd was chased down 3rd and we were on the run again. We kept off the street and went through yards and alleys. We jumped off a 6 foot high fence, something which I couldn't have done unless I was scared to death, (and I was).

When we reached our car on Ponotoc we could see the people and the police fighting on the corner of Hernando and Ponotoc in front of Claybourne [sic] Temple. There were many bombs being exploded up there.

6

C.H. -7

Soon the police were on Ponotoc. [illegible] and began to hit the man.

They then came over to us and told us to get this ---- car out of here. They told us to drive toward Hernando. The cop picked an inopportune time to stall and we rolled up our windows because there was gass [sic] on Hernando. The police must have thought that we were deliberately stalling and one of those cops began to beat our car door with his stick. When we finally did get started we drove up Ponotoc to Hernando where we were told to turn around and go back the same way we just came from. When we

7

C.H. - 8

Absent

C.H. -9

Said that the police on that end told us to go this way whe [sic] were told that they didn't give a ---- and for us to get the ---- out of there. You can see the [illegible] we were in. We finally went down Ponotoc and out 3rd. We [illegible] the troubled area and tried to wait until things cooled off to pick up the rest of our group.

About an hour later we were walking back to Claybourne [sic] Temple hoping to find them. It was in front of the church that we got tear-gas in our eyes. It [illegible] something awful and the more you [illegible] the more the more it hurts. [Illegible] the church and washed our eyes. Our friends were not there and there was nothing left for us to do but go home.

We were happy to find out that our friends had safely gotten home in another car and that they were

9

C.H. -10

Worried about us because we were so late getting [illegible] that the school [illegible] which the teachers had closed at 12:00 and she was worried about us. My father who was out of town had called home to say that he was taking the next train home.

This was an experience I will long remember. It was both frightening and exciting. The death of my brothers [sic] classmate, Larry Payne, had a grace effect on us. We knew the boy well and at first we didn't believe it. Anything I might say about his death will naturally be biased but I'll say it anyway. [Illegible] that the boy was [illegible] negro. [Illegible] to draw a knife on a man with a shot gun. What is worse is that his [illegible] was pointless. Nothing

10

C.H. -11

Was done that whole day to help my race at all. [Illegible]

[Please excuse my horrible spelling]

[Especially the spelling at Clayborn Temple]

11

E.A. -1

## “The Riot”

The march which Dr. Martin L. King and local civil rights leaders were leading to city hall last March 28, 1968, erupted into violence two-hundred (approx.) young belligerents started smashing windows and looting. The march was organized with definite purpose in mind. But there few young people didn't seem to care about that.

The actions of these belligerents cause the people who are not directly associated with movement to look on the entire situation with disgust and contempt and as a result they do nothing to help the cause. The violent and irresponsible act of thugs should not over-shadow acts of those who have real cause for grievance. I saw these thugs on the sideline start the trouble not the marchers. When people do not understand the reason why we demonstrate, if they did, they don't care about this cause. Their main purpose I think was to cause chaos as that they [illegible] benefit by looting.

1

E.A. -2

## “The Riot” (Cont.)

Later that evening when the march was about two hours passed, I had an opportunity to see a small Sunday store get looted. Neighbors in a certain community when I arrived on the seen [sic] were already inside the store. I personally had a very strong impulse to go in and get me something for nothing [sic]. But, after seeing a little girl come out with a half-gallon box of [illegible] Ice-Cream and an old man with two quarts of Bush-Beer I [illegible] that the prize was not worth getting my head bursted [sic] or even getting shot over.

During the excitement a helicopter passed over and I knew from previous experiences that it was time to go. However before I could get forty-yards away the street was filled with law-enforcement officers. They chased the looters but most got away. For this I thank God, because what they did to the ones

2

E.A. -3

They caught was unbearable. I think the riot was a definite advantage to the Negro cause because it brought forth new bills in congress [sic] and talk to better the whole Negro situation.

3

S.J. -1

## The March In [sic] Memphis

On Thursday March 28, 1968 a riot broke out here in Memphis. I did not witness the disturbance personally but I interviewed my boyfriend, Edward Thomas McKinnee [spelling?].

From the conversation I held with him I learned that there were so many people that he wasn't able to see as far as the crowd extended. He said the crowd was rather peaceful at first awaiting the coming of their leader, Martin L. King. When he did arrive the crowd proceeded down Hernado [sic] to Beale carrying signs of all types. He (the fellow I interviewed) carried one scene saying, Loeb has no soul.” [sic]

By this time the marchers who had made it to Beale and Main had started breaking windows and looting goods from different stores. The police who were on the scene started trying to get the marchers under control by spraying maze. He saw some fellows running down the streets carrying blots [spelling?] of material, liquor, and house whole [sic] appliances, they had gotten from the stores. He saw some

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S.J. -2

Boys chasing a cop. After the marchers returned to the [illegible] the police sprayed maze in the church? He said, little children were crying wanting to go home.

Within my community there was a bit of disturbance. McLemore Store, which is one [sic.] the corner of the street on which I live, was burned but not badly. There was a cleaners on Carnes [sp??] Avenue that was burned beyond hope. Several of the liquor stores had smashed windows. In one of the unit buildings at Melrose High School a slight fire was started.

Parents were disturbed and were calling and going over to the school to get their children.

My personal opinion of the march as a whole was that it was effective in that now all the small and some of the large businessmen are now exerting pressure on the mayor and other city counsels to resolve the strike.

2

J.K. -1

On the 21st of March, 1968, there occurred in Memphis a beginning of the end. The end of the bigotry, hatred and cruelty imposed upon us by "our great White Fathers."

The chronic need to solve the deep rooted, deep seeded problems of deprivation, poverty, ignorance and of being locked out of the mainstream of the society of life had finally reached its peak. I don't know what isolated incident on this particular day, other than the opportunity and the need to destroy these things which seemed to have

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J.K. -2

been destroying the Negro became very real.

The mass march which was to have been lead [sic] by the Rev. Martin Luther King suddenly erupted into the almost total destruction of Beale Street injury to many and death to one.

Suddenly, without any warning, teenagers began breaking windows and looting stores. These stores, which were owned by the white merchants, who for years had cheated our mothers and fathers. Then, without warning, the illustrious

2

J.K. -3

Police force of this city began to pounce upon innocent people who were in no way involved with the riot. They looked to me like little boys with new drum sticks, trying them out on the heads of their friends. They seemed to have forgotten that these were people and not the drums that they never had as children.

In the midst of all the caos [sic] and confusion, people "danced up and down" the street with bolts of material taken from Paul's

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J.K. -4

Tailoring Shop. It was amusing for me to see young men running down alleys swapping pants and suit coats as they went. I saw a little boy run into a store grabbing everything he could get his hands on. He then ran into the streets yelling to his friends, "Come on everybody, it's free"! In spite of the confusion, Rev. James Lawson and other ministers tried in vain to maintain order. While doing so, they were unduly attacked with mace and clubbed by the policemen who had supposedly

4

J.K. -5

Been sent to protect the marchers and not to abuse them.

As policemen [illegible] battled it out on Beale Street, isolated incidents began to flare up all over town. It was amusing to see store owners run from behind their counters to paint "Soul Brothers" on their windows. I saw televisions and radios literally walking down the streets.

Those things that couldn't be carried were destroyed.

As I drove home, I saw people discussing the events of the day and I thought to myself, this nightmare has finally become reality. I wonder how and when it will end.

From Miss X's eye witness report, I do not feel that the incidents that occurred on last Thursday could have been avoided. These incidents were an outlet for the tensions and frustrations that had been building up in the Negro for

many many years.

5

V.N.- 1

### From Protest March To Race Riots

On March 28, 1968, Martin Luther King lead what was suppose [sic] to be a peaceful protest march for the striking sanitation workers. The sanitation workers have been on a strike approximately six weeks. They are requesting a higher salary but Major [sic] Henry Loeb refuses to offer them what they want. So as a form of protest, they have staged marches, persuaded the majority of Negroes to stop shopping downtown and to stop patronizing at any Loeb businesses until the Major [sic] has granted them their request.

Dr. Martin Luther King was asked to come to Memphis by leaders of the strikers in an attempt to help end the confusion. Dr. King came to Memphis and suggested to the people that a work stoppage of all Negro citizen be held. "Let no Black Man or Black Woman work that day and let no Black Child go to school", stated Dr. King.

On March 28, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King was late arriving for his peaceful protest march. Before he arrived, violence had broken loose in one party of the city. It began at Hamilton High School and spreaded [sic] to other schools. A student who wishes to remain anonymous stated that the distrubance [sic] was started by a car of weird-looking men who looked as if they were from out of town. These men drove in front of the school and yelled, "Why don't you tear this school down!" They created a lot of tension and chaos among the students. When the cops were heard, the car speeded [sic] away.

In the downtown area, the march had started without Dr. King. Some of the marchers had began [sic] to break out the windows of some department stores. When Dr. King finally made his arrival, it was very difficult for him to control the mass of marchers.

"Marchers were everywhere but the rioting and looting took place mainly on Beale Street", stated my cousin who was taking pictures of the march and riot. "I was standing on the corner of Beale and Third Street taking pictures. I don't know how it all started but I over heard someone saying that some men in a car broke out windows and looted a few stores, then drove away when they heard the cops coming. I have seen riots before but I have never seen one like this before. When one man is downed by a cop, others come over and sartebeating [sic] the same man. He's [?] already down, why the hell do the rest of them come over and beat him also. [sic] I have pictures of this. Things began to get so out of hand, I moved up Third and away".

When the marchers could not be controlled by Dr. King, a police truck was summoned for him, it wouldn't stop so he was carried away in an early model car to some secluded place.

Only one causalty [sic] was reported to the public as a result of the riot. But a nurse's aid [sic] at John Gaston Hospital said that a young girl who was hit on the head at Hamilton died, This was not reported by the television or radio nor the newspaper. The news reported that only one was killed, Larry Paine, a student at Mitchell Road High School, was shot by a policeman,

It was stated by our insurance agent of Atlantic Life Insurance, that all the agents of this company participated in the march. But when the march was called off, he started back to his palce [sic] of work located at 526 Beale Street. On his way [illegible] -there, he had to pass through a crowd gathered on the street. The polices [sic] approached them and told them to "get in that house and stay there". He refused. "I don't live there and besides that, I have to report to work. "He turned his back to walk

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V.N. -2

Away and the policeman hit him on his head and busted his skull. He had to have his hair shaved and ten stitches. The bump on his head sticks far away from his skull and these persons I interviewed, the policemen showed extreme brutality toward the Negroes. They would beat one person until he looked like he would bleed to death or until he was unconscience [sic]. There were more young people involved in the rioting and looting than adults and I feel that if those young people were not permitted to participate in these marches, there would not be and would not have been any disturbances such as rioting and looting. These people are too immature to face such a situation. Because of them, the Major [sic] has set a curfew for 7P.M. to 5A.M. and called in state troopers and national guardsmen to help curtail the disturbances here in the city.

It seemed tha [sic] the rioters tried to burn down the city. Fire trucks, policemen and guardsmen roamed the streets all night long. Sirens were heard all through the night.

In my neighborhood, I can proudly say that there were no form of disturbances and I live near Southgate Shopping Center and other large businesses. Maybe it was because the people in my neighborhood knew that the national guardsmen were around or maybe it was because they are mature enough to know that rioting ad [sic] looting isn't the answer to the problem

2

P.S. -1

The March [Illegible]

This is an account of the things I witnessed during the Memphis riot and my personal reaction to it.

On Thursday March 28, 1968 I arrived at Beale and Hernando about 9:50 am. From there I proceeded to join the Marchers who were lined from Beale down Hernando to Vance.

There I along with about 4,000 other people waited from 10:00 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. We were waiting for the arrival of Dr. Martin Luther King who was to lead the march. During the period of waiting there were quite a few incidents of drinking on the sidelines, many signs were brought past us advocating black power and helicopter- the one that, as of now patrol, the city- kept flying overhead.

I think the period of waiting along with these

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P.S. -2

Other incidents helped tire people out and incite some feelings.

About 11:20 a.m. led by the sanitation workers and their leaders, we started walking up to Hernando, turned on Beale and proceeded up toward Main Street. On the way we passed several rows of spectators and policemen. In the middle of the block I witnessed a man passing out wooden sticks about 1 ½ ft. long and 2 inches wide. Next I saw a boy proceed to break out a window in Pape's Men's Shop with one of these sticks. Then I heard what a think was a shot and glass began to splatter over the street. People began to run in all directions, but we were instructed by Rev. Lawson to turn around and walk quietly back to the church.

Things went pretty quickly until we arrived at the church where mace was sprayed outside directly in the eyes of some people and where it entered the church and affected the eyes of most people in the lower part of the sanctuary.

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P.S. -3

Once most people were inside we were instructed to find seats in [illegible] could move out in small groups and go to our cars and then go straight home. Many people showed about being sprayed with the mace, and some left before they could be quieted. Announcements were made to locate children who had been lost when the people began to run and show fear.

I left the Church about 12:00 N and got a ride home with one of the men who lived in my neighborhood. His car was parked at Fourth and Vance beside the Loeb's Laundry on the corner of the street. Just as we pulled off John Jones (anonymous) threw a brick in the window of the Laundry. The police patrolled the area but were totally unprepared for the things that occurred. Windows were broken on all the corners in the Fourth and Vance areas except windows

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P.S. -4

In the stores of Negro businesses.

When I arrived home about 1:00 p.m., men were fixing the window in the Fish Market across the street from my

house. Later that evening the window was broken again. Also the windows in the Loeb's Laundry on the next street from me were broken, garbage cans were lined in the streets to keep the police from getting to these places. Fires were set in front of some white businesses and the police were kept on the run from place to place.

About 11:00 p.m. my grandfather called our house to get my brother to pick him up downtown at the jail. He had been on jury duty that day and they had just been released for that night. However, my brother didn't get off work until 11:30 p.m. and arrived home about 12:15 a.m. At about this time we proceeded to drive to town on our mission. Soon as we turned out of our street on Park Ave. we were signaled by

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P.S. -5

By a traffic police car to stop. When my brother stopped they asked him if he knew about the curfew, where were we going and why did it take all three of us to go (my grandmother was in the car) and get my grandfather. After these questions were answered we were told to "go on". We were instructed not to go through Main Street however. On our way back we came through Beale Street which had been boarded up and which was heavily patrolled by police cars. (The Nat'l Guard hadn't arrived).

For the next two days I was taken to work by my brother and picked up around 8:00 at night by my boyfriend. We were never stopped at night but we would see a constant line of police cars patrolling the streets, most of the time four or five cars in a row.

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P.S. -6

National Guardsmen were stationed at the shopping center [illegible] Lamar-Airways and around the Loeb's [sic] Barbecue at Park off Lamar.

The school in my community (Orange Mound) was set on fire and many liquor stores were looted over the weekend.

On Saturday night we went to the bowling lanes on Lamar Ave (Cherokee) but we encountered no police cars or no incidents of violence.

Before I tell of my reaction I must mention the fact that I saw several incidents of policemen running to get away from people whom they themselves had tried to push with cars, or to rough up with harsh talk. These people mostly young men, would not be moved by the incidents and a gun was pulled on one police car. I witnessed this and the fact that the car had three policemen

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P.S. -7

In it and [illegible] went flying down the street in the other direction when this incident occurred.

In my opinion the police department was totally unprepared for the Memphis "confusion". For one reason most of the cars were stationed in the downtown area in about one spot (for instance from Main + Beale to Main and Court).

I was never personally upset by the confusion, for I believe that since the Mayor will not consider giving the strikers what they want after these constant series of talks that it might take some violence and even bloodshed to open his eyes and the eyes of others who feel that the strikers aren't entitled to the things they are asking for I feel that if this type of solution will hurt the businessman enough for him to put pressure on the Mayor, then that's

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P.S. -8

What it will take.

I have gone on as always, none of my ideas about helping others have changed. I still think that everyone should have a fair chance to work to his fullest capacities without limitations put upon him because of his color or incapacity to learn one type of job. I have encountered various incidents of meanness [sic] on my job, but I have just plain ignored this display of ignorance and jealousy because of the intelligence that I might display during these "trying" times.

C.W. -1

## Memphis Violence Erupts In Sanitation Worker's March

A protest march by an estimated 6,000 negroes and a few whites, led by civil rights leader, Martin Luther King Jr., burst into violence on Thursday, March 28, 1968 when young marchers began smashing windows and looting downtown stores. A 16 years old negro youth, Larry Payne was murdered while about forty eight other persons were injured.

The vandalism and looting began on the historic Beale Street and it continued after the march was broken up by some of the policeman who were carrying shotguns, rifles and firing tear gas.

However, this march was very orderly until suddenly various youths began separating themselves from the main body of marchers and started window-breaking as well as looting [sic]. The majority of the young looters were of the "Black Power" advocates which are organized among colleges such as LeMoyné, Memphis State and Owens as well as some of the high schools.

There was quite a bite [sic] of brutality [sic], anger, hostility and profanity used by policeman. [sic] They used their club on

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C.W. -2

Young looters as if they were trying to kill them which was really unnecessary. Personally, I feel that they were not realizing the fact that they were hitting and dragging young people and not adults. They also act in a manner as if they were a part of the violence rather than preventing it and restoring order.

Some examples of the hostility and brutality [sic] given the negro youths were: A friend of mine (I'll call her Dianne) was standing by her brother's friend's car waiting, so they all might leave the violence together and an officer approach [sic] her and said, "Move this damn car out of the way." Dianne replied, "I'm sorry officer, but I cannot drive. He then began using more profanity and hitting with his club the side of the car until he had placed [sic] a dent in the side door. When the owner of the car arrived, he was quite shocked as well as scared and he immediately moved his car.

Shirley Woods (false name) a student at Hamilton, obtained [sic] a swollen lip from a policeman who was downing teenagers with his club.

According to the newspapers and television news, they all state the fact that [illegible] turned on the policeman with a butcher knife and the officer [illegible] in self-defense. There were [illegible] who saw what really happened.

Billy Works and Don Evans said that Larry didn't even have a knife and when the officer found him looting, [sic] Larry raised his hands and said, "Please Don't Shoot." But, for [us-?] turning toward the officer with a butcher knife is an untrue statement. Larry did not have a knife at all.

The killing of this innocent youth was cruel and brutal and was not preserving law and order. I feel that this was murder and not in self-defense.

I also feel that the Memphis Police Department should consist of better qualified men who can handle a situation like this without being hostile nor brutal toward negro youths as it was done in this demonstration.

The Sanitation Strike could have been ended days ago if and only Mayor Henry Loeb would submit to the union demands of dues

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C.W. -3

Checkoff [sic], and better working conditions.

Working in or near garbage is filthy [sic] and these men (in which 98 percent are negroes) have kept "Memphis Clean". And I feel that these men deserve recognition and believe that they will accomplish what they are after. And maybe one day Memphis will again be the clean and beautiful city that it once was.

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V.B. -1

A confident, nearly happy group gathered at Clayborn Temple around 10 AM Thursday morning, March 28. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was late arriving, and many at the church were ready to begin their own demonstration. But by 11 AM King arrived, and the march was ready after last minute emphasis on the non-violence of the marching protest. Hernando St. was the beginning of the march that was to turn north to west on Beale St and then to north again at Main. Dr. King was to lead the march. He expected no violence.

True enough, the “Black Militants” were not planning to use the demonstration as a spark for a riot. In fact, “John Jones said four days later that this group regretted its non-involvement; they had not counted on the amount of people who came out, and they hadn’t hoped for the five-hour lag between the time the National Guard was called in 2 PM- and their arrival at 7 PM. Mr. Jones said a major offensive could have been successful in affecting the whole city with organization of supporters and the use of the element of surprise. But the extra six days between the date proposed for the march and the actual one (posponed [sic] from 3/22 to 3/28 because of snow) were not used by the Black Militants to organize a riot

Dr. King was unaware, however, of a plan of six “Long” College students to keep the crowd non-violent until they reached Main and Madison. At this strategic point, the center of downtown, widespread destruction would be signaled by breaking the Florsheim Shoe Shop window at 2 S. Main. This plan was never carried out, of course, because the premature violence could not be restrained.

The march began its route north on Hernando and turned west onto Beale. Agitators were kept in check with less and less success as the crowd of 15,000 began to cross S. Third St and then S. Second St. A few stores past that last

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V.B. -2

Corner a young boy broke from the crowd and destroyed a window of Pape’s Men’s Store at 159 Beale, then darted back into the crowd. A group of boys then moved ahead of Dr. King and began breaking into the stores between Second and Main. The police did not stop them. King realized that the march was getting out of control and began to turn it back before reaching Main and Beale. The students who had pushed ahead anxiously were now at the end of the crowd retreating toward Second. After the marchers had turned around, the police began to follow them spraying Mace gas and clubbing them. The greatest number attacked and arrested were students retreating behind the crowd; only about 25 actually caused any damage.

Dr. King escaped through the alley between Main and Second. Looters moved into the stores from watching the marchers, and others removed merchandise from show windows. But no one was free from the gas. Even after the marchers returned to Clayborn Temple, police followed two looters into the church and sprayed Mace in the Sanctuary. On Beale St. policemen entered shops and ordered frightened owners and clerks outside. If they refused, they also were clubbed and sprayed with gas and forced from their own shops without explanation and without warrants.

Thursday night Beale St. was boarded up and guarded, and violence occurred sporadically in other parts of the city. One college student was using a phone booth at Greenwood and Walker and was arrested and jailed for burglary of the drugstore there until he was able to prove his innocence 17 hours later. Another incident brought the death of a 17-year-old boy being chased (for looting) by policemen. The boy ran into the boiler room of a project

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V.B. - 3

Nearby; he was cornered [illegible] and had nowhere to run. Yet he was shot to death at close range in that room, [illegible] and immorally.

Newspapers throughout the country carried the story. The Friday Chicago Tribune carried an extensive objective report of the incidents Thursday and the background of the march, indicating the complete refusal by Mayor Loeb to compromise or even negotiate with the union. The Friday morning Rocky Mountain News, however, covered the riot superficially, including one incident (only one) in the riot: a policeman put his arm around the shoulders of an elderly Negro man and guided him out of the chaos saying, “This is no place for you older folks.”

The article did not say that King and the marchers were retreating before they were sprayed with Mace. It lauded the officers for their restraint and gave all credit for ending the violence to them.

Explanation of the purposes of and reasons for the march in the main article (3/29 UPI) was only this: “The Memphis

demonstrations are to protest alleged discrimination against the city's garbage workers most of whom are Negroes." The sanitation workers cannot expect national intelligent awareness of the situation with unfair reporting.

But like Mayor Loeb the nation is going to see soon enough that the mayor's 1300 "boys" are men and must be treated like men.

3

S.C. -1

### My Position of the Riot in Memphis

The Negro has now made decisions and proposed measures which he hopes will release him completely of the suppression that he has been plagued with for almost three and a half centuries. Although it is true that the chain of slavery has been broken from the Negro there still exist barriers which enables the black man to fully enjoy and express himself as a first class citizen. These barriers are social, political, and economical ones. It may be unclear to many whites why the Negro has acted so suddenly to try and break the wall that has been used by the white man to blind the Negro of all the finer things of life. In this essay I will try and bring light to the sudden disturbance which occurred in Memphis.

For many years the Negro people have been a disorganized group of people and have to a large extent, lead dependent lives for an existence. The white man took advantage of the Negro people that he has had a lot to do with in separating by exploiting them and using them as working tools to accomplish his ends with very little regard to what could be done to better the Negro race has managed, to a large extent, to unify themselves. Being a Negro myself, I find that we are together in accomplishing our goal in breaking through the barriers which suppresses us as a group of people, but we are not

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S.C. -2

Together on just what tactics which should be used to accomplish this goal.

Just on last week (March 28, 1968) plans had been made by Negro leaders for a mass march on downtown Memphis. This march had supposed to have been non-violent. This is only one of the tactics used to show our concern for attaining full citizenship. This tactic has worked in cities of Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia and others for the overthrowing of specific issues which have weighed us from advancing. These issues were to integrate public schools, eating facilities, theaters, and other public places. Many of these things have been accomplished through a non-violent march, but there still exist suppression and discrimination. The march planned on downtown Memphis was aimed at a specific issue also. This issue was one concerned with our sanitation department. This issue has served to unify just about all of our race in this city. The workers of the sanitation department have been pressing to form a union that will be recognized by our city government. There is very little assurance for any working group of people without a union. So, as a pressing measure to make the city meet the wishes of the sanitation department, workers went on strike about six weeks ago. To this day the strike has not been very effective. To assist the strike, the march on downtown Memphis last Thursday many Negro supporters and some whites went to show their concern for the sanitation workers.

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S.C. -3

This march was led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and prominent representatives of the NAACP and many ministers. The march started about eleven [illegible] Thursday morning front of Clayborn Temple [illegible] Church. It [illegible] as far as Main and Beale Street and all of a sudden violence broke out by other Negro individuals who felt that the non-violent tactic was the wrong position to take. They felt that violence was the only thing that the white man would listen to. It is their common feeling that if they destroy or attempt to destroy or attempt to destroy something that the white man has put his whole life's saving into would force him (white man) to learn to the wishes of the Negro race.

This was the second week of Spring, flowers blooming, birds singing with everything showing life and beauty. In the same way seeds of violence had been planted and like the flowers and the birds these individual's emotions began to bloom and to show their faces. Like a seed under the right growing conditions, an individual, black or white will either show how much he appreciates or how much he disagrees with something.

It might seem a little strange, but many of the non-violent marchers joined the riot when it started. This only shows that many of the so called doves have deep embedded feeling to fight and destroy like the individuals who started the

riot.

3

S.C. -4

To me, it is a beautiful thing to see people express themselves in truth [illegible] that they really feel. This violent act [illegible] than an expression of life itself one would [illegible] and think about the historical background of all earlier generations, he will recall that almost every group used some act of violence or force to attain their goal. The Romans are a good example and so are the early American white men of this country. No one is going to give you anything in a country like this one. What's more the Negro even have a hard time earning that which belongs to him. Laws work to a small degree, but they are not enough for a group of people who have been slighted and suppressed, living discontented and meaningless lives to a large extent. It is becoming the general concensus [sic] of many Negro Americans that violent force is the tactic which should be used to fully free the Negro people.

When violence started in Memphis on the day of the march, Dr. King was told by other non-violent leaders to leave the march for fear that he might get hurt. Many store windows were broken and lots of merchandise were [sic] taken. Out of the confusion one Negro youth was shot to death while turning himself over to his murderers, who was a policeman. I was not surprised to

4

S.C. -5

See this riot occur in Memphis and I will not be surprised [sic] to see a greater disturbance take place if justice is not brought to this law officer.

Thursday night Mayor Loeb put a seven o'clock curfew on all individuals of the city who did not have necessary excuses for being on the street. National guardmen [sic] were called in to quieten the city. During that night there were about one hundred-fifty individuals arrested for being on the street after the curfew. Many businesses were set fire and there was also some looting. On Friday more National guardmen [sic] came into the city. That day there was another march, but this one was non-violent. That night the curfew continued and other individuals were arrested that night for being out on the street. There was very little violence on this night. Saturday there was another march. It was peaceful and was about the smallest one of all. There were only two hundred-thirty to fifty people in this march. By Sunday everything was back to normal as far as the city government was concerned. The curfew was lifted and things were about the same other than the thousands of National guardmen [sic] still patrolling the city.

5

J.W. -1

### The Memphis Riot

I shall give an account of the riot and how it effected [sic] me on Thursday, March, 28, 1968.

On Wednesday evening March 27, some friends of mine that live in my neighborhood were discussing the march on the city hall, they expressed their opinions and views about the march, but no one spoke of starting or planning a riot, most of the fellows only mentioned the mayor and his being to [sic] stubborn to give the sanitation workers a raise in salary. On breaking up that evening everyone agreed to meet at Clayborn Temple the next morning.

On Thursday, March 28, 1968 on arriving at Clayborn Temple around 10:15 a.m., I was surprise [sic] to see the number of Negroes that had come out to support the mass march. After meeting some of my friends we began to mingle among the crowd until the march started, all while doing this we heard no one mention starting a riot, even though their [sic] were numerous black power advocates in the crowd. After the march had begun an [sic] I had marched to Beale and Second one of the minister [sic] with a portable public address system

1

J.W. -2

Came down the street telling everyone to turn around and go back to Clayborn Temple, at this time I was not aware of what had happen [sic] on Main, but only seconds later the policemen with nightstick [sic] as long as baseball bats and gas masks began to [illegible] and children back down the street with swinging nightsticks and bursting tear gas shells. I was lucky in that I was able to dodge the nightsticks, but unlucky in that tear gas being shot from shot guns

were a bit faster than most of the now fleeing crowd could run. With every one [sic] now running down Beale street, some of the fellow [sic] around me began throwing sticks at the windows along Beale, even some of my friends begin [sic] to throw sticks and get in on the looting, probably the only reason why I didn't get involved was that the tear gas had me crying so my only concern at the moment was getting back to the Temple without getting hit by one of those oversize [sic] nightsticks.

After reaching Clayborn Temple the minister that I mentioned earlier was telling everyone to go into the Temple, but the Temple had quickly filled and there wasn't room enough for all the people outside

2

J.W-3

Making up a small crowd, but soon the policemen came an [sic] ordered the crowd to break up and go home but the crowd didn't move fast enough to please the policemen so they open up with some more tear gas, then some of the younger men standing around began throwing bricks bottles, and sticks at the policemen, but on this [illegible] session I moved a little faster than before, thus I was able to keep out of range of the firing gas men. Later to my surprise I found out that the policemen had broken down the doors at the church and had shot tear gas on the people inside. I got this information on breaking down of the church doors from a lady that was inside at that time, who live down the street from me.

On reaching Fourth and Vance I witness [sic] some of the worse [sic] beating [sic] given during the whole out-break by about twelve policemen, who beat three young men and one middle age [sic] man, they were beaten without [illegible] they were knocked unconscious, then after finally stopping they called some of the friends of the beaten men from across

3

J.W. -4

The street with this remark, "come over an [sic] get these niggers [illegible]."

To see all of the fellows that came through the park with all kinds of stolen merchandise. At this time I figured that the only and the best thing for me to do was to get into the house and take care of my burning red eyes and running nose. With this my day as a marcher and a riot witness ended.

4

E.C. -1

"Memphis, Tennessee In the News"

Memphis, Tennessee has joined the ranks of other large cities in its fight against violence, rioting and looting. Memphis has been the headlines of every newspaper in the country. This was provoked by occurrences [sic] that began here last Thursday March 28, 1968.

The march started out as proof to the city that Negroes were together in their fight to improve their standards and especially those of sanitation workers. The sanitation workers are entering the 8th week of their strike for dice check-off, better working conditions and higher wages.

The march was was [sic] led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, a diligent civil rights worker. Dr [sic] King has been in and out of jail in his attempts to free Negroes of their social and educational barriers.

At 8:00 a.m. Thursday morning the citizens began gathering at Clayborn Temple, the starting place of the march. During this time there was an outbreak of violence at Hamilton High School [cut off] 178 Wilson. This story was related to me by Miss Pamela Brown of 1825 Castalia who is a student at Hamilton and a participant in the disturbance. She arrived at school at 8:30. There were three [cut off] at the bus stop telling them not to enter [cut off] school. Some entered the school and others refused to.

At 8:40 the sanitation workers "traitors" passed by in their pick up trucks. The students began throwing rocks at the truck and the squad car which accompanied it. The police called in other policemen when they arrived they chased

students back into the school.

During this disturbance a student was beaten over the head by a policeman with his night stick. The young lady was taken to the hospital.

The march was scheduled to start at 9:00 but due to the lateness of the arrival of Dr. King the march didn't get under way until 11:00. The march progressed without incidents for about twenty minutes

Dr. King, Rev. Lawson and assistants to Mr. King were at the head of the march. Marching behind them were about 10,000 strikers, well wishers [sic] and sympathizers of which I was a member.

Everything was fine until a group of hoodlums and and [sic] teenagers began rioting and looting. They began rioting and looting. They used the sticks that they were carrying signs on to break windows and beat policemen.

The officers attempted to put a stop to this looting and rioting but were very unsuccessful for awhile [sic].

In one incident a policeman was beaten very badly by the rioters when he attempted

2

E.C. -3

On Main Street a man was driving along. A policeman was beating a Negro so badly until he got out of his car and began beating the officer. The officer freed himself and started running.

The march was turned back after this outbreak of violence, a lot of innocent people were hurt. They were gassed by law officers. At 12:00 the marchers had turned around and were on there [sic] way to Clayborn Temple from there they would disperse.

Thursday a young Mitchell high School student Larry Payne, was shot by a policeman when he attempted to get away. It was claimed that he was caught looting. His parents contend that he was surrendering.

Thursday night a curfew was imposed on the city. All citizens were to stay in from 7:00 PM to 5:00 am. The curfew was lifted Monday. There was a lot of damage done to small businesses such as [Illegible] Fruntiture and Appliances store, Caslalia [Illegible] Market, Goldmans [sic] Laundry.

Presently Memphis is getting back to normal. Dr. King is scheduled to return to Memphis tomorrow 4-3-68 to make plans for another march on Monday.

3

G.K-1

#### A Factual Account of Thursday's March

To get adequate coverage of the entire march to some extent, I decided to interview persons at the front, middle and the end of the line of march. It so happened that all are from LeMoyné. The following paragraphs are their accounts of what happened from their vantage point in the march. First, from the front of the march Bill Hodges reported the following information. "I was near the front of the march and not far from Martin Luther King when he finally arrived. I had been at Clayborne Temple since early morn like countless others present. About 10:00 p.m. the people became anxious to get the march started. The sun was shining making it hot. It was felt that time was being wasted just waiting around the church. When the march did start, there was a lot of noise and talking. King finally arrived and everybody tried to get near him. Upon reaching Beale and Linden, windows started to be broken. People were walking on the sidewalks, some crashing windows. All that could be heard was noise and shouting. King and allies hooked arms together. They shouted for the others to do likewise, but with no luck. Newsmen took pictures. A CBS Newsmen photographed the window crashing and the crashes. However, policemen did not bother anyone until the marchers reached Main Street with the window breaking. The police promptly started breaking the march up when York Arms' windows were broken out. They used tear gas, chasing the marchers back down South Main. The marchers scattered in various directions. Some of them ran toward Vance and some toward Beale. The CBS Newsmen's camera was taken and broken. At Lansky Brothers Men's Shop, policemen sprayed mace in looters' eyes and beat them with their billy sticks. A group of soul brothers chased a policeman through Handy Park while an officer across [mic] the street from the incident stayed there. The [mic] of the policemen ran the marches on down the middle of Beale Street toward Clayborne Temple. In the process, they sprayed tear gas. The marchers going back to the church shouted to each other, "they're shooting tear gas". I didn't go back to the church, I went home instead. I was not hurt

and unharmed I went home. However, he did observe some of the people going back to the church but looters and some other people passed on by the Clayborne Temple. I asked Bill was he scared during all the events. He answered, "no, I went for a cause".

About middle ways the march was Anita Jones. She related the following account. "Before I knew anything, the march had begun. The line of march had been held up for the arrival of Martin Luther King. I heard noise all around me. As we walked on down Beale, I noticed that a few of the shop windows were already broken. The line of march finally reached the turn on Main from Beale. The front of the march had turned the corner when suddenly people came running back down South main toward Beale. I didn't know what was happening. The thought of possible shooting at the front of the march ran through my mind. I was rather tense and nervous and yes, even scared. I heard a voice over a megaphone telling everybody to go back to the church for the march was over. Being mad and somewhat disgusted, I refused to run back like the people approaching me. I got on sidewalk along with a friend and began the way back down Bale. My friend and I turned on Third Street off Beale and sat in a Volkswagen and observed the sights. Most of the people were afraid and wanted to go home. The people from what I could see, were cooperating with the police by moving on but they pushed forcefully those individuals not able to move fast enough.

C.D. - 1

### The Way of Infamy

The Way of Infamy was Thursday march 28, 1968. A march had been planned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in support of the Memphis sanitation workers. The sanitation workers had been on strike for the past seven weeks.

The march began at 10:30 a.m. beginning at Clayborn Temple A.M.E Church are Pontatoc and Hernando. The march leaders informed the marchers, who were approximately 15,000 strong, that the route of the march would head north up Hernando to Beale, West on Beale to Main and north on Main to the City Council's Canchers. The majority of the march never reached Main.

Violence erupted on Beale, at about 1:15 a.m., due to certain youthful elements of the march, destroying storefronts. The initial rupture of violence began when someone ---

--- broke a window at Pope's Clothing store, 159 Beale Street.

Dr. King, the march leader, was told incidents of violence were occurring on Beale and at once tried to stop the march. It was too late. Widespread beating had begun on Beale with lightning speed. Dr. King's march marshalls [mic], Dr. Middlebrook, Dr. William Smith and others tried with the aid of Bull Harris to direct the march to return to Clayborn Temple, I must add with a minimum amount of success.

Those of us who did attempt to reverse our march found ourselves in the mist of tear gas, mace and suringing nightsticks. Men, women and children were being beaten as if they were animals. Police moved in on the marchers as if they were an enemy force attacking Memphis.

About fifteen of us made it back to Clayborn Temple around 1:00 p.m. that morning.

Upon arriving at the Temple I saw policemen shooting tear gas at point blank range into the doors of Clayborn Temple and the Department of Minimum Salary Building next door to the Temple. Women and children were being brought out of the Temple by policemen using bodily force. On Jackson, one of the march marshalls [mic], appeared in the door of the Clayborn Temple and asked all marchers to return home to prevent the possibility of further beatings.

D.S. - 1

On Thursday, March 28, 1968, thousands of Memphians witnessed the most historic march in the city's history. It was organized on behalf of the thousand sanitation workers who had been on strike for more than seven weeks because Mayor Loeb refused to grant them a dues check-off. In addition, a one-day work stoppage was called among all Negro employees and a half-day stoppage was called among all Negro businesses. Many high schools, college students, grown-ups, and various religious denominations participated.

The march was led by Dr. Martin Luther King and was scheduled to start from Clayborne Temple and cover Beale St., Main St., Poplar, and back the same route, but unfortunately it was broken up less than a half-hour after it

began. No one would have expected it to turn out the way it did because it seemed so peaceful at first and everything looked just like a carnival.

Citizens even began to assemble the area as early as 8:00 am and as late as 11:00 am. They were still pouring in Atlanta ---

D.S. - 2

---for a while and when Dr. King finally arrived, some of the students crammed and jostled him a bit and I managed to squeezed [mic] and squirm away through them to shake his hand, but nevertheless everything get off so well. People began to wave their signs and students broke out with soul sounds. Then seconds later, a group of about thirty high school students started to tear up a bedstead that was in front of a house until they all had an iron pipe. By this time, the march had progressed on the Beale St. and some of the by-standers began to shatter window of department stores and looting. Furhter down the street, more windows were broken and the policemen were trying the best they could to stop it. Then the march circled on around the Main St. where the policemen ordered the marchers to turn back around and start back to the temple because they didn't want same kind of damage to occur on Main, but despite their order, the march did ---

D.S. - 3

--- reach as far as York Arms and then Dr. King abandoned the crowd and the police took over. The crowd got out of control and Main St. turned into a battle between policemen and marchers. About two-hundred Negro youngsters started on the east side of Main and began to break everything in sight that was breakable and then other policemen rushed in with tear gas and mace to force them back. I was able to find a safe spot and while I was standing there & saw about fifteen cops beat a man unconscious with their blacksticks and dragged him over to a sguard [mic] car and threw him in the car. Hen the same cops turned around and jumped a minister. They ruffed him up a little and sprayed him with mace. The fighting continued for a while but the policemen were able to form a wedge and clear everybody off the sidewalks, out of restaurants, ---

D.S. - 4

--- pool halls, and lounges. Many of the people were allowed to walk out unharmed, but in many cases the policemen broke in and sent them out bodily. Looting continued in the six-area block of Beale and valuable merchandise was taken especially from Pape's and Paul's clothing stores and then more violence broke out at Fourth and Vance. Loeb's coin-up cleaners was bombed and looters cleaned out the liquor store next door and took all the liquor they could and that they couldn't take, they just took and broke it. Then the policemen were rushed back to the temple to dispense the crowd inside and swirl around in all sections of the city. National guards were called to insert order and Loeb immediately ushered a seven to five a.m. curfew for the next four days.

From looking at statistics, liquor stores were reported the favorite target ---

D.S. - 5

After Loeb imposed a ban on the sale of alcohol beverage, riots then turned to force and stole their boozes. Fire was the second largest problem. There were some hundred and fifty fives [mic] to two-hundred reported in one night. Some business [mic] were even hit twice and some sixty persons were reported injured and one fatality resulted and damages totaled over \$400,000 excluding fires.

G.D. - 1

On Thursday, March 28, 1968, Memphis was a part of something that it has never been part of before. There was a march led by Dr. Martin Luther King and other ministers interested in the sanitation strikes. This was to be a peaceful march to aid the sanitation workers, but it wasn't.

The march affected many of the surrounding communities. I live in the southwest portion of Memphis and it was really affected. About 10:00 a.m. some of the black power advocates, just a few though, tried to start some commotion at Carver High School. They succeeded. Children started fighting and broke out some of the windows. The principal closed the school, that is, no one could leave ad no one could enter. The students could only go home if their parents [illegible]

G.D. - 2

them. The patrol cars came and tried to obtain order and in the process, two of them were injured. While this was going on, the principal of Kansas Elementary school closed its doors also. The children could only leave if their parents or some responsible person came for them. The principal at Kansas did this because he didn't want any violence to break out at the school.

There were several fights on the street as well. Patrol cars had to come and break them up and regain law and order. On Florida Street, several store windows were broken out by mostly just plain thugs or school drop-outs. This wasn't the work of the black power advocates, but they were the persons who broke windows and completely damaged two grocery stores on East Trigg Avenue. The people responsible for these acts of violence seemed only to be concerned with businesses owned by whites.

M.V. – 1

A Report on the Citizens March in support of Striking Sanitation Workers – March 28, '68

An Eye Witness Interviewed

Q: Why were you at the March? You're not but 12.

A: My father had attended some of the nightly meetings on behalf of the striking sanitation workers and they asked for the participation of everyone; people were to stay off from work; children from school.

Q: Where did you go?

A: We went to Clayborne Temple about 9:15.

Q: Were there many people?"

A: Yes thousands of them.

Q: Did you start marching right away?

A: No. someone told us that Dr. M.L. King had been delayed and the march would be late starting.

Q: How long did you wait?

A: About an hour.

Q: What was happening while you waited?

A: We were lined up in the streets and given instructions by the march marshals [sic] who told us to stay in the streets, walk at least arms distance from the people in front of us etc. Some teenagers were singing & dancing, and people were taking pictures. A helicopter, with photographers, was flying overhead & each time—

M.V. – 2

It passed, the crowd would hold up signs and start cheering. Finally Dr. King came and everyone started cheering him & trying to get up close to him. The Head Marshal gave the order and the march began.

Q: Were you near your father?

A: No. the ministers were first, next the sanitation workers, then young people, and adults were behind us.

Q: Then what happened?

A: After that, we started walking up Hernando to Beale Street, singing songs and holding up signs against against [sic] Mayor Loeb. One song said "I don't like bread & butter, I don't like toast and jam, I don't like Mayor Loeb 'cause he ain't worth a dam."

Q: Who was doing most of the singing?

A: Teenagers and some adults adults [sic] and some teenagers were dancing.

Q: What happened next?

A: When we got to Beale & Mulberry one teenage boy threw a stick at the window of a [illegible] and broke it. Then the other teenagers started cheering and they started breaking windows too! Up ahead of us, they had started some kind of violence, but we couldn't see. We never did make it to Main.

Q: Did you throw anything?

A: No. I went where my father was.

242

M.V. – 3

Q: Were you afraid?

A: Kind of. I was shaking because I thought we were going to get stampeded by all those people.

Q: Did the crowd go wild?

A: No. The grown people kept walking and most teenagers were running, some were looting the stores.

Q: Then what happened

Q: We heard over the bullhorn that everyone was ordered back to Clayborn Temple. We took a short cut down Beale to Third behind the fire station on Linden, then to Hernando & the Church. My father took us this way to keep us from getting hurt. On our way to the church, we saw some boys break the window of Pape Men's Shop and pull the [illegible] & suits & material out of the store. They put the clothes in Hogue & Knott Grocery bags and ran.

Q: Were girls looting?

A: Almost all were boys, but there were some girls getting things.

Q: Did you hear any comments about what was happening?

A: Everybody was saying "they shouldn't be doing that" (breaking windows, etc.)

Q: What were the police doing?

M.V. – 4

A: At first, they didn't know what was going on then they got the news on their walking – talking and they started hitting teenagers or anybody with their sticks and one policeman was asking what happened. They didn't allow anyone in the corners.

Q: What happened back at the Temple?

A: we were among the first people to get back so we got a front seat and waited for the others. People began coming in. Some had been beaten, others maced, some children were lost from parents or older sisters & brothers. It was very noisy.

Q: Were you maced?

A: No, but the police shot teargas [sic] on the steps of the Temple and the fumes came inside and burned my eyes. My brother was carrying. He is 10. The leaders tried to organize the people and find lost children. We were told to go directly to our homes and we would be notified later on about what the plans were.

Q: Did you leave right away?"

A: No, we waited a while.

Q: How did you get home?

M.V. – 5

Q: We rode the bus. On our way to catch it, we saw a 2 white bus drivers who were off duty and were waiting for a bus themselves. A crowd of boys started after the man and they ran toward a funeral home. The boys were throwing rocks and sticks and bricks and bottles. One bus driver was stabbed in the back and the other hit upside his head just as they

reached the funeral home. The people let them inside and closed the door against the boys

Q: Did anyone report this?

A: Yes, we saw a Memphis Transit man directing the bus traffic and my father told him what had happened & he called for police and an ambulance. Then our bus came and we went home.

Q: How do you feel about what happened?

A: I didn't like it at all. The way some people were cursing in church and talking so loud, the tear-gas burned my eyes and seeing all those people getting hurt. I wanted to march down Main Street to the City Hall and hear Dr. King Speak!

CH – 1

## HOW VIOLENCE MARCH TURNS INTO A NIGHTMARE

The march, Thursday March 18, 1968, that started from Clayborn Temple turned into a nightmare. The march was a non violent march which was to begin at 10:00 a.m., but was delayed because the plane Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was to arrive on was not on schedule. He finally arrived at 11:00 am. He arrived at Clayborn Temple at 11:45 a.m.

By this time everyone was tired of waiting, and they went right into the march. Dr. King felt that the Marchers had been organized and instructed on the behavior that was expected of them, but he did not anticipated [sic] the outside force of youth that were rolling against the idea of nonviolence. So they started from the Temple down Pontotoc Street to Beale Street.

Twenty minutes after the nonviolent march had began a group of youth on the side all ran between some of the Marchers and began to crash windows, looting stores, throwing bricks stones, bottles and sticks at the officers standing by. The Marchers were told to turn back by the Marshalls for their own safety because of the disturbance. The police were shooting in the air and shot mace in the crowds and begin to beat a lot of innocent people because they did not know how to handle the situation [sic]. Many persons were injured because of this.

It did not matter to the police whether you were innocent or guilty, they were the white factor giving out of the blows and you, the black factor taking the beatings.

I felt that the situation [sic] could have been brought under control in a few minutes if the policemen had performed their duty without prejudice feelings and went after the ones that ---

C.H. – 2

--- were causing the disturbance and not miscellaneously beating innocent people. The hold [sic] Negro community would not have had the suffer for what a few did. Some policemen did not feel that beating and kicking the Black man was enough so, he wanted to make a reputation for himself. One wanted to be above all the others, so he lowered his gun on a helpless, unarmed, young sixteen year old Negro boy and shot him to death, as thou [sic] he was target practicing with a moving target.

I personally feel that the strike and march could have been avoided as is evident of the "Sanitation Workers' Prayer". How could Loeb be so hard-hearted as to cause the whole city to suffer the consequence just for simple Dues Checkoff and Union Recognition. But because of the problems of the color line, and the [illegible] of fellow man, America has become a country of "So little done, and So much to do."

I also feel that because of the strike and the marches that the Negroes as a whole have become more unified and they seems [sic] to be working and striving for the same common goal or common interest. Now, they are willing to fight as long as it is necessary for the right and freedoms [sic] that every man should enjoy. They feel that the time for getting things done is now; and if they donot [sic] achieve their goals now, they will never be obtained.

And now History was made in Memphis as the nonviolent March broke out of control and turned into a Nightmare.

C.H. – 3

## SANITATION WORKERSS [sic] PRAYERS

The Henry, who art in City Hall.

Hard-headed by thy name.

The Kingdom C.O.M.E.,

Our will be done.

In Memphis, as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our Dues Checkoff,

And forgive us our boycott,

As we forgive those who spray Mace  
against us

And lead us not into shame

But deliver us from Loeb.

For Ours is justice, jobs and dignity.

Forever and ever.

**FREEDOM!**

J.D.W- 1

The Story Behind The Story

Everyone knows for a fact that a 16 yr. old negro boy was killed by a 25 yr. old white policeman Thursday March 28; and that's about the extent of the actual knowledge. From there we go to beliefs and speculations [sic], based on rumors. Everyone has heard a version of maybe several versions of how or why it happened, and in as much as each version is, to a large extent very different. For an example: "The police shot the boy because he was in the process of stealing a color T.U. and when he was caught, refused to adhear [sic] to the policeman's calls to halt," or that "the boy pulled a 6 inch, an 8 inch and even a 12 inch knife on the policeman and that he shot in self defense;" the validity of any of them is questionable.

But Monday April 1st, I heard a version which I not only don't doubt the validity of but have enough faith into repeat. This version was told by a close relative of the boy and here is what she said.

Larry had just left home and was ---

J.D.W. - 2

---on his way with a piece of material in a paper bag, to a seam stress. The police saw him with the cloth and the bag and evidently thought that he had been looting and the material was stolen merchandise. They began to yell to the boy, who probably because he was frightened by all the excitement, ran from them. The police chased and caught up with him and, according to a neighbor who also, after the shooting, ran to Larry's home to inform his mother, after a few words pushed the gun into the boy's stomach, apparently to muffle the sound and fired.

This was by no means the end tho, for Larry was dead but the policeman hadn't gotten his fill of brutality yet.

After the neighbor, who will remain anonymous, informed Mrs. Paine of the shooting, she immediately ran out to see her son and as she bent mournfully over his body, this same policeman, who had not 10 min ago killed her son, began beating her in her chest and on her arms and finally forced her to seek ---

J.D.W. - 3

---refuge to avoid further injury. "He acted like a wild man, I never saw anything like it in all my life."

This version of the murder is not known publically and the boy's mother has no interest in telling it, not to investigators, police or any other authority. Right now the only thing she's interested in, the only person she wants to see is officer "John Doe; her reason is obvious.

E.M. – 1

### The Death of Larry Payne

The Sanitation Strike has created much high tension. This tension has resulted in many losses, injuries, and one death. Here is an actual account of the death of 17 year old Larry Payne.

Date: March 28, 1968

Time: about 12:50 pm.

Place: the 878-900 block of the Fowler

Homes—Fourth Street—1/2 block

across Crump Blvd.—Southbound

Larry Payne, running toward the Fowler Homes on Fourth Street near Crump, made it to a basement on compartment in the Homes. Patrolman L.D. Jones ran toward the basement shouting, "Come out, come out, or I'll shoot the 'damn' door down." Larry then came out with his hands behind his head and said, "Don't shoot, I ain't did nothing." Patrolman Jones then looked at young Payne for about 5 seconds and then stuck the shotgun in his stomach and shot him. Young Payne then fell and a lady nearby closed his eyes. Payne's mother fainted. Patrolman Jones pointed the shotgun at some of the young onlookers and told them roughly to go into the house.

As he walked away, Patrolman Jones met another officer and he replied, "Why did you shoot him?" Patrolman Jones then walked to the police car along with the other officer. An ambulance was called.

E.M. – 2

\*\*\*Note:

Young Payne did not have a knife when faced by Patrolman Jones. A knife was later found inside the basement. Neither was there any type of merchandise from looting.

(Witnessed by an 18 year old male resident of the Fowler Homes)

J.P. – 1

On March 28, 1968 at 10:00 am, my telep-hone rang. It was a man who belonged to our church calling to tell us to go and get my sisters and brothers from school for some fellows were breaking the school to get the children to come out. In this particular morning my mother and I were asleep, we knew a march was scheduled for those sympathetic toward the sanitation strikers but we did not know it had turned into a race riot.

She got up and went to Booker T. Washington High School and the male teachers were standing in front of the school and told us to go to the second floor to the left for the principal's office before we even said a word.

The school was in [illegible] with their parents. When we got our sisters and brothers into the car we asked them if they had seen any type of violence at school. My younger sister said, "A friend of mine and I were looking out of the window toward the back of the school when we saw about 10 or 12 young Negro men jump the fence coming toward the school buildings. They had black scarfs on their heads and were---

J.P. – 2

--carrying switch blades. They came toward the windows cursing and kept cursing and saying that they were going to get the children out of school because they had been asked not go to. These men seemed to have started the conflict at their school.

We drove around for about 30 minutes and I saw many things happening that I could not believe. On the corner of Vance and Fourth the Loeb's Laundry and Bar-B-Q windows were out and the places were burning. There were Negroes from the age of 1 year to 55 years standing on the corner yelling, "Burn, Burn, Burn." There were some police standing in front of the places but they did not say anything and I did not hear the sounds of fire arms; evidently no

one called to report the fires. While the people were standing and yelling about 8 police cars loomed by and stopped instantly at Vance and Danny Thomas. About 4 young Negro boys, 12 to 15 years of age, were suddenly stopped and thrown up against the police cars and searched; tearing their clothes as they were pushed, hit and turned. I did not know what these boys had done but the treatment they were receiving was cruel, even if they had just surrendered to a gun battle.

Later that evening a curfew was called---

J.P. - 3

--and the National Guard moved into our city. Someone set a vacant house on fire behind us and two fellows that live on the same street I do went with me to see what had happened. On our way home, about a 3 minute walk, four jeeps and three police cars came down our street and the last police car stopped and out jumped the police. These are the exact words one policeman used, "Stop, you goddamn niggers, stop. What the hell you doing on the street? Don't you know we have a curfew because of trouble you've caused?" He told them that we were going home and that we lived on that street. He said for us to run home quickly and he [illegible] run. The fellows ran but I did not because they had stopped us in front of my home.

On March 29, Friday, the curfew was still on. My boyfriend and a friend of his came over and we watched television. About 7:10 pm they left going home. My boyfriend said that on their way home, they were driving, some National Guards yelled out to them, "Niggers, get off the street." These types of name calling kept going on and on and as Negro men they were insulted. Things like this kept up the tension in Memphis between the Negroes and Whites.

On March 30, Saturday, the curfew was still on. My boyfriend and some friends of his came---

J.P. - 4

---over around 4:00 pm. They told me what they had gotten from certain stores and they also stated why they did these things. Some of them had hit or cursed some policemen. Most of them said they had done this because they had been beaten by the police for nothing, the only reason evident was that they were Negroes. It seemed as though a peaceful march had turned into a race riot. For these were college men, the Negro leaders of tomorrow who were speaking only of violence and hatred toward the whites.

As it seems, I saw more than I believed would happen to me. The police were to blame for the violence, it had been stored in the Negroes too long in Memphis. Now we the younger Negro generation will not stand for the treatment our parents have received. Proms have been cut out for high school children, what for, could it be the intergration [sic] of schools? Things started way back were taken and nothing said about them. But when mace is sprayed inside a Negro church on innocent people, sprayed on Negroes at the 1st march for no reason at all, there is and there was hatred stirred up in the March 28, 1968 march in Memphis.

Most people said it was the cause of black power—but it was the cause of white power and Loeb power in Memphis.

J.P.-5

No Negro stands a fighting chance in Memphis if his [illegible] is white. Therefore, I say, let the problems and sentiments of the Negroes be heard and solved for not until then will the younger Negro generation stand for less; for we will resort to violence.

M.W. - 1

An Incident near Washington School

Thursday afternoon March 28, 1968, I was an eyewitness of an incident that happened [sic] Booker T. Washington High School.

My mother told me and my two older sisters Sandra and Marie to go to Washington School and get my younger brother Edward. When we arrived at Washington, I went inside the school to get my brother, but after being in there 15 mins, Sandra and Marie came inside to get me because they wanted to get away from the area. We went down the stairs to the door and I soon found out why they wanted to leave.

Some 150 teenagers had broken into a cleaners and were walking down the streets with clothes. Soon the police arrived and used tear gas to stop them. We started to ---

M.W. – 2

--- go out the building but an officer ordered us back inside until it was over. We stayed in Washington School for about one hour, and we still didn't get my brother. I feel that the whole incident was uncalled for because those clothes did not belong to the teenagers that took them and they had no reason for taking them.

L.T. – 1

#### The Effects that The Sanitation Strike Has on Memphis

The Sanitation Strike has placed a temporary curfew law in Memphis; it has caused people to become fearful and violent; it has caused some lives to be losted [sic]; it has caused many persons to be injured and most of all it has cause Memphis to lose its reputation as a clean city. I have witnessed the curfew, the violence, the duty city, the marches, and the fear of Memphis citizens.

Although Memphis was a peaceful city in which to live, Thursday, March 28, 1968, it became a city of fear, violence and corruption. The civil rights leaders had planned a peaceful march, but because of uncontrollable circumstances it was cancelled. Because of the cancellation, tension arosed [sic] in the city by the citizens of Memphis. When the 28th came and the march began citizens released their "locked up" tension. I witnessed some of the violence, ---

L.T. – 2

the fear, and the corruption.

On March 28, I saw citizens who were kicked, pushed, [illegible], and beaten [sic] up. While I was marching down Beale Street, I saw people throwing bottles, sticks and bricks. These objects hit the windows of businesses all up Beale Street. People began to run, and some began to loot the stores. This was the beginning of a young riot.

I talked with my sisters about the attitudes and reactions of the teachers and students at the schools in which they student teach [sic]. The teachers at Orleans Elementary were nervous, tense, and afraid, but the white teachers were more tense and afraid than the Negro teachers. They asked questions about what was going on. About 10:10 o'clock, parents ---

L.T. – 3

---began to come to the school after their children. About 10:30, the parents were upset. Parents started coming by the [illegible]. The school was in an up-roar. All classes had stopped and everyone was looking out the windows and listen to the intercom system. The telephone was ringing every few seconds. One parent came in a taxi cab with a rag on her head, an overcoat, and a great big stick in her hand. Another parent speeding down the street. He parked on the wrong side of the street and ran into the school to get his children. About 11:00 strange characters began to come into the building. The teachers and principle [sic] heard that the rioters were coming to Orleans at 12:00 to destroy. The principle [sic] then dismissed all the students. The students began to run, push and scream. About 11:15 ---

L.T. – 4

--- there was not a child in the building, except those waiting on parent – teacher.

The situation at Cummunity [sic] Elementary School was quite different. The teachers appeared to be calm, although they were somewhat tensed. The parents came after their children, but they too seemed to be fairly calm. All the students were dismissed at 1:00 o'clock.

I interviewed some old people as well as some young ones. My grandmother lives in Binghampton on Tillman Street. The old people in that neighborhood are very fearful. They will not leave the house after 6:00 o'clock. My grandmother does domestic work. She said "My white lady is afraid to come to pick me up and I am more afraid to get out and go to work."

When I interviewed a friend of mine that lives on [illegible] Street, she was so terrified ---

L.T. – 5

---that she and her family were about to pack their bags and leave town. I talked to 4 [illegible] on Friday night, March 29. They were burning down some businesses on both corners of her street. State troopers were all around. She was afraid they would burn her house in the night, therefore she began to pack her bags to leave town. Nevertheless, she

did not leave town.

The only fatal casualty in the march was the death of Larry Payne, a sixteen year old boy, who was shot and killed March 28, 1968. I viewed the body of Larry Sunday March 31, at Ford Funeral Home.

I believe that the situation in Memphis will get worse before it gets better. The citizens have tense "bottled-up" in them. The tension has to be released. The citizens released this tension by rioting and looting.

S.B. - 1

An Eyewitness Report on Happenings in My Community During the Period of Unrest

On Friday, March 29, there were some of my neighbors who were out after curfew. They were in front of their apartment with a record player. They were dancing and shouting. They should have known this would attract attention because there were National Guards only two streets away. The police and National Guards came down my street and stop in front of this apartment. They asked who lived there. The man, who I shall call Sam, said [sic] he did. They simply told him to take the record player in the house and to get all the teenagers the street [sic]. Everything was going well until one boy yell, "No one tells me what to do." Sam told the young man to go in the house. The young man kept talking and cursing. The law enforcement officers seemingly just ---

S.B. - 2

---annoyed him. They moved further down my street where they picked up a couple who were trying to get a cab. They put the couple in the squad car. The police then got out of the car and the National Guards, which were in two jeeps with three men in each jeep and a truck with about eight men, jumped out with guns aimed and ready to fire. The policemen went behind the apartment building and returned with the young man who had done all the talking in front of the apartment in handcuffs. They had both the young man and the couple in the squad car. They just sat there for about a half an hour. They then let both the young man and the couple go and they then left.

On Saturday, March 30, there was a structure, which was to be an apartment, burned about three blocks from where I live. I was returning home from dinner at a friend's house. We were about to turn on the street that passed ---

S.B. - 3

---by the structure when we saw police cars and National Guards. Suddenly there was a loud bang which we soon discovered was a shot. One policeman was shooting at something of someone which we couldn't see at that time. We very quickly turned and went in the opposite direction. I learned later that the policeman was firing at a car that he had ordered to stop by it kept going. The police caught the car and arrested the passenger. No one was hurt.

During the unrest of the past week, there were a number of incidents that occurred in my neighborhood. These incidents and all of the others everywhere in the city were no one person's fault but a combination of people; the policemen, the National Guards, Mayor Loeb, thugs, just to name a few. I am sure that the march last Thursday was just the right opportunity to release [illegible] that had been ---

S.B. - 4

---stored up in many Negroes in this city. There will be continuous incidents if some type of agreement isn't reached by the sanitation workers and the mayor. This is only one issue that caused the disturbances [sic] during the weekend. The other causes must be interpreted and solved by all involved. Then and only then can Memphis become peaceful and quiet again.

G.C. - 1

On Thursday March 28, about 10 am, I noticed all the parents going to school fringing their students home. Later I found out the reason why there had been a fight at the school and they would not let them come home unless someone came to get them, regardless of their age. So I decided to go get my sister who goes to B. T. Washington High. When I got to the school I noticed that Richard Graham, a student at Washington had been cut and they were putting him in a car. After I had gotten my sister and we were on our way home we noticed some boys breaking out the windows of Goodfriends Laundry and go inside and begin taking some of the clothes. While they were taking some of the clothes we noticed four girls running pass [sic] us with lamps, therefore, we decided to see where ---

--- they got them from. We walked down a block and saw that they had broken into Pic's furniture on Lauderdale. The students were taking lamps and TV sets. When we got ready to return home we noticed a little boy around the age of ten running with a bottle of whiskey. Later we learned that he had gotten it from Q.S. Liquor store where some of the boys had broken in.

## NO NAME

### The March on Memphis

On Thursday March 28, 1968. I awakened excited and ready to participate in The March to be led by Rev. Martin L. King. I was almost ready to depart when my mother suddenly appeared and said, "You aren't going to the march because I've got a funny feeling that something is going to happen. No amount of pleading could make her change her mind, so I missed the March myself.

I kept the radio on in order to keep informed on the march. Suddenly, a breathless announcer broke into the program with the news that there was a riot going on at Hamilton High School and that the students were proceeding to the downtown area. Not long after this, the announcer reported that the March had gotten out of hand and that some people were breaking out windows of stores on Beale Street and were looting the stores.

My oldest sister decided to go down-

-town and see what was happening, she was gone for quite sometime, so I tuned to the radio for more information.

My sister returned with news. She reported that she had seen several young men, some whom she recognized as students at LeMoyne, ganged up in a liquor store with all the doors locked. She said the downtown area past the York Arms Co. was ravaged and that the stores had been looted.

Another sister, who had participated in the March, came home with other bits of news. She said that as the people came from the Temple that they were ordered. Suddenly, she continued, a young man not far in front of her took a stick up and hit the same window. Another boy came [illegible], broke out and windows were being smashed and looted.

About that time the police began to push the crowd back. In the process my sister was shoved and hit. She returned-- to the temple with some of the others. There, she said, police arrived and trouble broke out. She got mace sprayed into her eyes and they turned quite red.

All in all the events that happened during the March have pretty much varied with different people, but almost all agree that (1) black power groups and young people did most of the window breaking and trouble starting and (2) that police used vile language and strong force to get the marchers into line. I can only say that I wish I had been there.

## M.B. – 1

### "The Memphis March that Turned into a Riot"

In this paper I shall attempt to give some point a [illegible] on what triggered the riot in Memphis March 28, 1968 about 12 o'clock which had all intention of being a march for the sanitation workers and also other willing people who wanted to march in their behalf. Also information from people interviewed who actually saw the destruction of our city Memphis. And finally, things that occurred in my neighborhood.

As I have stated in my introduction, the march for the striking sanitation workers took place March 28, 1968 in downtown Memphis. At this time LeMoyne College was having its spring vacation so that left me at home. I was asked by one of my friends who attends Owen's College and was going to march. I told her without hesitation no. I was not going to march, not because I didn't agree with the sanitation workers marching for their rights but I was just plain scared to march because I ---

## M.B. – 2

---just knew all those people who were going to be downtown at the march. Some of them wasn't just down their [sic] in behalf of the sanitation workers.

On this day my sisters went to school. A lot of parents didn't allow their children to attend that day because Dr. King had asked for a work and school stoppage that particular day and these parents probably thought something would happen to their children. Nothing really happen at the school my sisters attend but all the children get excited because of the things happening to children who attended school that day. I was sitting in my yard when a friend of mine came over and asked me had I heard two children got killed at Hamilton School, if I had known this was a mere rumor, I wouldn't have gotten so excited. My aunt called and told me to go and get my sisters because they were scared and wanted to come home. They thought people would come over to their school rioting like they were doing at other schools. At that instant I started up the street looking for them, just after ---

M.B. – 3

---I started over the hill they were coming home scared and confused. We went in the house, locked all the doors and turned the radio to get all the information we could. And from what I heard going on in Memphis I was certainly glad I didn't march. Later another friend called and [illegible] had me over to the school in his neighborhood and ran all the children and out of school. He said the children were running everywhere and the teachers were scared and locked in their rooms.

Things were still occurring all day in the Memphis area. That morning my cousin, who marched, told me how it actually was downtown. She said she never in her life saw so much confusion and looting. The rioters were tearing Memphis up, department stores, shoe stores, and jewelry stores. In other words they were destroying Memphis. She believed the march which later turned into a riot, was triggered by the rumor that some children had got killed at Hamilton and the rioters wanted to get revenge.

M.B. – 4

But I told her that might have triggered the riot but I think the people who started the riot saw a good chance to do some damage and did it. I think they used the march for the sanitation workers as a front to do things they wanted to do where they couldn't get away with such as looting without the march because many thousands of people were marching downtown and the riot starters could almost get away with anything.

Also another cousin of mine who lives near Lemoyne said people probably those who were the ones started the rioting were carrying T.V. sets and Hi-Fi's down the alley and police officers were right behind them.

This incident I am about to give some information happen in my neighborhood about 1 a.m. Saturday morning. My neighbor's house was set on fire, he is a sanitation workers, I don't know for sure but it was said that two men set it on fire. But I do know that the police arrested them. While the fire department was trying to put the fire out

M.B. – 5

---one of the men who was arrested rolled his car on the water hose to keep the water from coming through to put the fire out. Policemen and detectors were all over the place asking questions and getting people out the streets because it was a curfew on that morning.

In concluding my information about the happenings that occurred in Memphis, I would say what happen to our city was bound to happen one day with all the tension and pressure. There have been riots in almost all the cities up north etc. People just didn't believe there would or could be a riot in Memphis because they thought they had everything under control here in Memphis. But it did happen to Memphis March 28, 1968 and as of now we don't know what the overcome will be.

DJ. – 1

“It Finally Happened in Memphis”

They said it would not and that it could not happen in Memphis –but it did happen. I was an eyewitness to the burning and looting that happened in my neighborhood. I also interviewed two persons who were participants in this march that took place last Thursday, March 28, in support of the sanitation workers.

It was quiet, early Thursday morning, until a couple of neighbors came to ask me to go and pick up their children at school in my car. They heard that it was a riot there. That was not a rumor. When I arrived, parents were garnering their children as fast as they could. There were policemen at both ends of the building. They had captured a phalanx of youths, who were believed to have started the calamity. Later that afternoon, the principal of that school was beaten up.

When I arrived home, everything was tranquil, until I suddenly saw people running down the street. I stopped a young girl, and she told me that the “Invaders,” a popular Black power organization in Memphis, were bricking every bus and car or truck that passed them. But it was later learned that it was not the “Invaders” group, but a group of intoxicated thugs, who lived in our own neighborhood, “The T and F gang.”

That afternoon, I saw a bevy of people gathered around the two neighborhood stores, both owned and operated by whites—one Jewish and the other Italian. I talked up the street to see what was happening. It just so happen that my neighbor across the street was in the shore at the time. She said that the leader of the boys told the two grocers to close up. The Jewish grocer closed immediately, but the Italian grocer pointed his gun in the youth’s face and told him that he was going to close when—

D.J. – 2

--he was “good and ready.”

That evening, at about 8:00pm, both stores were in flames. The other store in the neighborhood, owned by a Chinese, Mr. Lang, was untouched. His store was closed that day with a sign in his window, “Gone to March.” At 3:00 am Friday morning, March 29, the hoodlums had come back to finish burning the Italian grocer’s store. Also that morning,

No one was allowed to enter or leave the area in which we live. All day Friday, there was a special helicopter circling our street.

On Saturday morning, March 30, looting began in both stores, where some of the food and articles were not touched by the flames. The police and national guards were called. The policemen were very rough. They struck innocent people, who had nothing to do with the looting. I was articulately dumbfound, while watching the policemen run down innocent people. Later that evening, things got quieter.

The two persons, who I interviewed, agreed to the fact that the riot downtown, March 28, was started by a group of teenagers, who felt that they could no longer wait for Dr. Martin Luther King, who was late on arrival and leader of the march. When Dr. King did arrive, he had trouble trying to get to the front of the march. When he did reach the front of the march, he had trouble trying to control the marchers, being that they were unfortunately crowd and in-orderly [sic]. How else would you expect of a crowd. The police then began to shoot the mace to control the marchers. Then the mace was being shot, some of the windows began being shattered and broken.

Finally, I have concluded that the riot was not started by the teenagers for the marchers. It was begun by the police, who were so anxious in trying to control the marchers with their anger and fear, that they were unable to control themselves with—

D.J. – 3

--the mace triggers at their fingertips.

My reaction to the whole situation is this: 1. I feel that it (the rioting and looting) was not in vain and that it did not accomplish something, although I am a nonviolent person. 2. I feel that if Mr. Henry Loeb does not come to a complete agreement with the sanitation workers, that more rioting, burning and looting will develop.

E.L. – 1

“Ill-fated Feelings was the Cause”

On March the twenty-eighth nineteen hundred and sixty eight, a Thursday, there occurred a march in Memphis for the sanitation workers which started out peaceful and ended up in a sort of riot.

I did not participate in the march and neither was I downtown when the disturbance started but I did get an eyewitness look at a small disturbance in my neighborhood. The Friday morning after the riot at the end of Dison street, the police stopped two Black Power advocates in a car and questioned them. The two fellows weren’t doing anything as I could see but the police thought they might have had a gun or knife in their car, but they found nothing. The police were about to let them go when one of the police got heated and started spraying gas in people’s faces for no reason at all.

My father is the person I interviewed to find out what really happened. He was downtown the day of the march and was pushed into the disturbance when it started happening. He said that what really happened was that most of the

young people and some older persons also, who were not primarily concerned with help---

E.L. – 2

--ing the sanitation workers in their strike, started breaking windows and tearing up the town and getting all they could from the stores to take home. He said also that if some of the leaders, especially Martin Luther King, had tried to stop these people, they would have knocked them out too just as they did other people who tried to stop them.

I think that what really caused the riot was the fact that the Negro had already been displeased with certain racial inequalities and the march for the sanitation workers gave them an excuse to revolt in the most revolting way they knew how.

W.W. – 1

“The Memphis Riot”

On Thursday March 28, three hours after the riot in Memphis had started my sister and I went out to look for an apartment for her in our car. After we started to come home, we went up Lauderdale by Booker T. Washington High School, we stop [sic] in front of Pic's Furniture Co. for a yield sign. While we were waiting for these cars to pass, I saw three bucks thrown into the Pic's Furniture window. A few minutes later I saw teenagers running into the store looting. I then drove away.

A few minutes later we went to Hall's Burger Bar on Gaither where we saw a car load up guys who had been drinking because they said they had just broke [sic] into a whiskey store. They said that they also broke into Lansky Bro's. and stole some silk and wool material and they also---

W.W. – 2

---said that they were going to burn Memphis down.

That following Monday when I went to school, a student in my class said that he broke into some whiskey stores and that he and some other guys took over the march from Dr. Martin L. King. He said that the yhad this planned for a long time, he said that they had planned to get into the heart of Main Street and just tear it up. This student also said that after the troops leave [sic] the riot was going to start all over again.

So in conclusion, I don't think the riot really help because those that started the riot really didn't care about the sanitation workers at all. If they did, I don't believe—

W.W. – 3

---they would have started the riot. And also after actual hearing about the other people taking over the march from Dr. King, I really believe he didn't have any part in the riot.

L.D. – 1

The Aftermath of the Riot that Occurred in Memphis

The march that was held on Thursday March 28th did not last thirty minutes before violence occurred. It was intended to begin at Clayborn Temple and ending at City Hall where Dr. Martin Luther King was to speak. However, the march was discontinued because of violence on the part of some of the participants. What really caused the violence can only be answered by those participating in the looting and rock throwing.

The purpose of the march was in support of the sanitation strikers which, as a result, brought the Negro community closer. It brought them closer by proving that they were together for once and that the mass along with the leaders could let the councilmen and mayor know how they felt. It also proved that not only did the Negroes object to what was going on but that whites as well were marching in support of justice and equality on jobs.

However, the violence that occurred in the Beale St. area did not accomplish the Negro community anything but clothes and the items which did not settle the issue---

L.D. – 2

--that the sanitation workers had confronted to the mayor. Had it been a peaceful march as intended, there would have been no need for state troopers [illegible]. First of all, I feel that no one [illegible] to fight for what is his. For example, [illegible] states citizenship and equality for everyone regardless of race, which as a result [illegible] is the right of the Federal Government to step in [illegible] these rights were not dealt with properly. Nothing can be accomplished by violence, but much can be done in a peaceful and orderly manner.

B.W. – 1

“What Happened on March 28th?”

The week of March 24 – 30, I was out of town. I went on the trip to “Freedom City” with a group of LeMoyne’s students and faculty. During the time I was away a march was led and halted by the Rev. Martin Luther King due to an outbreak of violence on March 28th. I heard many rumors while I was away. So I decided to investigate them by asking questions of persons who really saw and participated.

I heard that Hamilton High School had burned down prior to the halting of the march. So I talked to my brother and sister who are students at Hamilton. They told me that they reported to school as usual with many other students. The attendance that day, March 28 was very few. So about 9 o’clock they and other students started to catch buses to go downtown and join the march. My sister said that one bus let the students on without paying their fare and remained at the stop until the students unloaded the bus.

B.W. - 2

The police came and kept the students from boarding the buses. This led to rock throwing by the students at the police. The chasing of students by the police developed into a “cat and rat” game.

I heard about the destruction on Beale so I talked with Ms. K a 19 yr. old student at one of our high schools, who doesn’t wish her name to be revealed, that participated in the march on March 28th. She said everything got underway from Clayborne Temple successfully. When they turned on Beale the sound of glass breaking and teenagers looting the stores carrying bolts of material and other merchandise out was seen. The police moved in and started beating any and everybody that was in there [sic] way. She said they returned to the church. While sitting in the church she heard screams and felt a burning in her eyes this was the result of policemen throwing tear gas or mace in the churches.

My personal opinion is that if the newspaper would tell the truth and don’t stir up uneasiness among the people by their reworks ---

W.M.R.-1

Memphis during the Riot

To begin my case [illegible] Memphis [illegible]

On February 28th [illegible] sanitation workers went on strike. It was reported that they wre striking for a number of things, but among these were higher wages and recognition of their union as a bargaining agent.

Mayor Loeb gave the sanitation workers a small percentage of the raise requested but he refused to recognize the union. Due to Mayor Loeb’s stand strong feelings were aroused in the Negro community. And on March 28th of 1968 this resentment came to a climax.

On this date the late Dr. Martin Luther King was to lead a non-violent demonstration beginning at 10:00 am. He was late because his plan didn’t arrive until 10:22 am.

At 10:30 am the WLOK newscaster reported that the march was about to begin because Dr. King had arrived at the airport.

At 11:00am I heard that the march had begun and that the march was proceeding down Beale Street.

W.M.R. – 2

At 11:30 am the newscaster reported that the march had gotten out of [sic] and because about 400 negro [illegible] demonstration into a riot. [Illegible] on the corner of Beale and Main were being looted. Police had been called to the

scene and Dr. King had had leave [sic] the march immediately.

At 12:30 pm there was a report that the police had been called to the scene of a rock throwing incident at Hamilton High School. The incident had occurred because about 200 students had refused to let other students enter the school building because Dr. King had asked all Memphis negroes to support the sanitation strike by staying home from work and keeping their children home from school.

At 12:30pm it was reported that the rioters were looting [illegible] on Third and that a 16 year old negro by the name of Larry Payne had been killed by a policeman who said this was in the line of duty and in the protection of his own life due to the fact that he was attacked with a butcher knife. Although many witnesses reported that Larry Payne was shoot [sic] with his hands—

W.M.R. – 3

---in the air.

At 1:00pm the newscaster reported that Governor [illegible] had sent [illegible] National Guards into Memphis. He also said that Mayor Loeb had ordered a curfew for Memphis to begin at 1:00pm and end at 5:00am and that the sell of alcoholic beverages would end until further notice.

Later in the evening I talked to others who had observed incidents during the course of the day. They reported cases of police brutality. Policemen were attacking people for no apparent cause and most of the looters were teenage boys.

I noticed and talked with the people around me. Most of them were afraid to get involved and that the incidents were too close to our neighborhood.

Everyone blamed Mayor Loeb for the whole thing.

L.S. – 1

Rumors that were Rampant in Shelby County

Thursday, March 28, 1968 promised to be a beautiful day. How wonderful to be able to do absolutely nothing on such a lovely spring day! When spring came to Memphis it came in full [illegible]

The physical atmosphere however, was not indicative of the emotional atmosphere which pervaded the city. Tension was high, especially between supporters of the Sanitation Strikers, who were predominantly Negro, and supporters of the city administration, who were predominantly white. Because of this, the conflict had taken on the aspects of a racial disturbance.

Dr. Martin Luther King was in town to conduct a mass march down Main Street which was to take place late that morning. I intended to sit in the sun and listen to the progress of the march via radio. After much delay, the march finally began. Everything seemed fine until the announcer said: "the march has been discontinued; the marchers have turned back toward Clayborn Temple...."

The rumor began with a loud scream: "Get your children from school, get them quick before they are killed. The white folks is [sic] murdering them in their classes. O Lord, what are we gonna do? A white man just walked into Ford Road School and stabbed two little girls. O Lord, have mercy!"

The woman, a neighbor, was screaming and crying while she ran from house to house. The people were shocked, then angry. Panic stricken, they made a run on the schools in the community. So many parents came for their children that the schools finally dismissed all classes and closed for the day. (It is important to note that not one student was harmed or threatened at Ford Road School or any other schools in the county.)

This was the rumor that touched most Negroes in Southwest Shelby County, but there were others more vicious and shocking.

L.S. – 2

Take for instance, the one one [sic] which said that the police were gunning Negro down on sight [illegible] said that young Negro [illegible] were threatening the teachers and students of various schools because they had not observed the march by staying home from school. Then there was the one which said that the police and students of Hamilton High School were engaged in open combat and that a number of teachers and students had been killed and injured.

The reaction of the people in the community is noteworthy in that they are indicative of the reaction of the Negro community as a whole. The anger, the frustration, the horrors were so intense during the height of the rumors that the refutation of the rumors could not erase them. The sentiment of the community can be expressed in the statement of the old grandmothers: "Honey, anything you can name, the white folks is [sic] evil [illegible] to do it."

D.W. - 1

Changes which I Have Noticed since the Sanitation Department Strike

The changes I am going to be concerned with are those which have taken place only since the riot Thursday March 28, 1968.

One major change which I have noticed is the change in LeMoynes students attitudes toward such a vital communal problem. LeMoynes students usually talk very readily about problems which they are in the middle of; but as a whole they seem to be reluctant or a bit frightened to discuss or even speak of rioting incidents---

D.W. - 2

---which occurred that Thursday and since they usually try to show that certain problems are justifiable or unjustifiable, but here they are not much concerned or if they [illegible] they definitely won't voice their opinions.

In regards to the curfew which was imposed by Mayor Loeb, there were less people on the streets in my neighborhood. Though, people in my neighborhood are not very active but when the curfew was on, nobody was see on the streets after the designated time.

Expressions on the faces of some of the whites who live on the same street---

D.W. - 3

---as I are different that friendly expressions is not there now, but a more less trustful and hostile expression is present. This expression has been present every since the strike but even more so since the riot.

As I have previously stated, my neighborhood is a very quiet, racially mixed neighborhood. It is not but four negro families in my block. There was not any riot damage in my neighborhood whatsoever—no windows were broken, no looting or any disturbances [sic] [illegible] from the major riot incident downtown that Thursday. Ther4efore, my statements are very limited.

R.S. - 1

The Memphis Crisis

Since I am not a resident of Memphis, I was not in Memphis during the rioting Thursday. I can only give my opinion and describe how people around me feel and how this rioting influenced the people of my hometown, Dyersburg.

When I heard about the situation last Thursday, the first thing that came into my mind was, why did this happen? Reading the newspapers and hearing the radio and television, I have not found the answer to this question. In my opinion, the rioting was started by persons irresponsible and ignorant to the fact that violence does not solve anything.

In my opinion, the rioting is not finished. Someone is waiting for the next march to start a disturbance. When the next rioting starts, it will not be very easy to calm. I predict the situation to be like that of Detroit

R.S. - 2

The people in my hometown became frightened. Everywhere you would go, people were talking about Memphis and the "riot." All the persons I came in contact with repeatedly stated the [sic] Memphis would be another Detroit or Nashville. Not only did they say this but they also stated that Memphis is the beginning and there will no [sic] end to it, because all other surrounding cities will attempt similar strikes and maybe have similar riots.

The people in Memphis are afraid a lot. They fear another march because it could result in more destruction and more deaths.

Persons in the community where I am staying are afraid to get out at night anymore. The talk in the community now is what will happen next? If not this, the statement, "King should have stayed out of Memphis," is ringing.

No one can predict what will happen next. Last Thursday is the beginning of Memphis fearing a crisis because of ignorance and stupidity of citizens and its city government.

F.H. – 1

The Riot

I was not in the march neither did I observe any of the rioting. Therefore, my paper will consist of what somebody said and what I have read in the newspaper and have seen on television.

Mrs. Singer said, "There was a large crowd of people about three thousand, gathered at Clayborn Temple. They had gotten tired and restless from waiting for Dr. King, who was to lead the march.

The march started a little after eleven very peacefully. When I reached Main and Beale, the head of the line had gotten to Main and Gayoso. At this point the crowd turned and started running. Then they turned and started marching again."

I asked her when did they start running. She said, "I don't know, but then the same thing happened again, and this time I heard glass splattering. A group of boys was coming down the sidewalk. They were throwing and breaking windows. About the same that I had run as far as Lansky Brothers, they started breaking the---

F.H.-2

---windows of the store and people began to go in and get things."

I asked her if that was the only store that they broke into. She said, "No, it wasn't the only store, but the people were running everywhere. Reverend Lawson was trying to get the people to march back to the temple.

I ran back to the "Big M," and a group of policemen came in and started curing. They told us to get out, because they were going to close the flare. If they thought that persons were moving too slow they would shoot them with this gas that they had."

Miss Conny said, "I saw the boy the day that he was killed. We were together at one time. He was doing no more than the others, but I lost contact with him.

I will never go back to another march, I was so scared."

I think that the march was for a worthwhile cause. Even though many blame Dr. King for everything, I feel that the accusers are wrong.

F.H. – 3

I feel that the policeman killed the young fellow out of anger. Even though the policeman said that the boy looked older, I personally know that he looked much younger.

It would have been much better today if the strikers would have gotten that small raise that they wanted. A raise and the other small things that the strikers wanted would have been much cheaper than all of the damage done; the police and National Guard protection, the loss of money because of the curfew, all of the people who were injured and most of all – the death of Larry Payne.

W.J. – 1

On Thursday March 28 around 10:00 am my husband and I were still sound asleep. This was his first day off in about two months. He was off because of the march downtown. Maybe we should have been marching that fateful day but we felt that we had made contributions to the strikers and that was enough. Well, at 10:00 am the phone rang and my mother-in-law was calling to tell us of the windows breaking downtown. I was so sleepy that what she was telling me was going in one ear and out the other one. What she was telling me did not soak in until I had awoken from a second phone call from her at about 11:30 am. This time she was telling me of what was going on at the "Big M" across the

street from Universal Life Ins. Co. A lady friend of my mother-in-law's was at work in the Universal building and was scared because all the workers inside the building were threatened to be burned alive in the building.

I don't go along with rioting or burning businesses and breaking window because it seems to cause more problems for those Negroes who have jobs. But then again, it seems to bring results because white employers ---

---become scared because they know that they have been cheating the Negroes for years and when their businesses are threatened, these men for the first time in decades start treating the Negro like a human being instead of an animal.

If the white man would only realize that this is the core of rioting and would go about treating Negroes like humans before rioting, the white man can save himself a lot of water!!

M.M. - 1

#### A Student's Corruption of the Sanitation Strike

Personally, I think that the sanitation workers strike is highly justified. It is a peaceful method of bringing the inferior and dangerous conditions under the scrutinizing eye of the general public. In the past there have been numerous incidences where sanitation workers have been fatally or otherwise wounded in the process of performing their jobs. One specific employee with whom I am acquainted is a typical example of this. While picking up garbage over town he noticed his skin was beginning to peel as a result of some chemical a housewife had placed in her can which had managed to seep through his gloves. Even today the portion of his skin that was in contact with the chemical is discolored.

In this paper I do not intend---

M.M. - 2

---to place the blame on anyone individual for the situation could be simply a result of the working out of natural economic factors of the society. Everyone is familiar with the principle that when the type of work requires little or no skill and the position can be easily filled regardless of how necessary it is, it is poorly rewarded in material goods.

However, sometimes there are cases when principles outgrow their [sic] usefulness and I feel that this is one. Although the job may appear minor to an observer the risk involved makes it necessary and rising standards of living make it mandatory that the job be better rewarded. There have not been any resolutions passed to give the slightest indication that something in the near future is forthcoming to eradicate the workers' poor working conditions.

M.M. - 3

In order to maintain the status quo and forestall progress the plight of the sanitation workers are conveniently linked with the not so popular civil right movement. In the past legal victories on the behalf of the sanitation workers are almost non-existent and there existed only scattered complaints among individual workers prominent Negro leaders like Roy Wilkins, Bayard Rustin and Dr. Martin Luther King Dr. have come at the persistent urging of Memphis ministers in support of the strike. Memphis leaders hope that through their protest and skill something for the best can be achieved.

Strikes are peaceful means of forcing employers to grant changes demanded by certain workers. They usually result from employers refusal to give workers sufficient wages or increased benefits and make needed changes in working conditions.

M.M. - 4

These factors were all apparent causes of the Memphis Sanitation Strike. The specific demands of the workers are full recognition of their union and a dues check-off The average garbage man check is greatly decreased to almost nothing after the city takes out social security, union dues, insurance and Shelby United Neighbors Fund [illegible].

[illegible] after obtaining the interest of the NAACP the garbage strikers have an agency through which they can channel their powers and obtain results. I do not believe that if the demands of the strikes are met that will be a [illegible]. The problem is a pressing one but it is not a new one. Intermingled with the sanitation workers plight are historical beliefs that the Negro is a inferior, that white and Negroes cannot mix peacefully economically and also racial stereotypes of the Negro as an [illegible] and -

--cheap labor coupled with old policies of segregation and discrimination to name a few have part in the trouble too. The Commercial Appeal March 29, 1968 says, "One Day Started It." To me this is misleading. It started a long time ago but has just now found an outlet for its pent up emotions

Negroes in this country are in the minority and thus they must work harder for their goals than members of the majority group. It is the responsibility of the exploited worker to strike and do legally anything else to obtain his rightful place in society, economically.

In this occupation which is almost entirely Negro I can't understand why the white population are also so antagonistic and impartial to the strikers' cause.

M.M. – 6

There is no strong economic competition going on in this field and I can't understand why there is such a negative and indifferent attitude among the populace. Laws are conceived in different ways for different races. However, sanitation workers should employ them if public officials or private citizens stand in their way illegally. Being in the right does not always assure justice; therefore, the strikers must fight and even die if necessary for their cause.

#### Other Opinions

Students:

Upon interviewing Larry Coney, a student on LeMoyné's campus I obtained the following reply. He said he did not feel the strike was justified because the strikers were not unionized and therefore had no –

M.M. – 7

-basis for their demands. In his opinion the strike has lasted so long because of this and this is also the reason he guesses why Mayor Loeb is so indifferent.

Another student, Danny Crawford, felt that the sanitation workers should strike for higher wages and a union to insure future bargaining power. He felt that every individual who works should make enough money to supply the basic needs for himself and his family without being robbed by the city.

#### Housewife's View

Mrs. Geneva Jordan, a housewife of 926 W. Holmes Rd. states that she believes in the peaceful tactics of the strikers but she [illegible] the violence brought about by the gang of young hoodlums who took advantage of the situation –

M.M. – 8

--to loot and start several minor fires throughout the vicinity. She dislikes the thought of having her right curtailed to go to places after dark, let her children go to the downtown show or out shopping after 7pm. These barriers are enforced by the public officials when they enforce the curfew and by unofficial persons who make threats to those not in accord with the sanitation strikers pleas of don't trade in businesses downtown.

#### A Businessman

"A nationally known Negro business leader has called for a cooperative effort between Negroes and Whites owning businesses in a plan to dispel tension between the races. Berkeley G. Burrell said, "If you gain harness with us here and now we can reduce the tremendous liability of public-

M.M. – 9

-welfarism and high police cost by making element contributing to these cost productive members of society."

#### A Priest

A Catholic priest believes in the cause of the workers but not in the disgraceful looting that accompanied it.

The tense situation still exists in Memphis and therefore its total effect cannot be estimated. However, this is my evaluation of the strike.

D.M. – 1

#### "The Negro Ministers as a Contributing Force in the Riot"

The beginning of the anti-Loeb feeling which has penetrated most of the Negro community started in Loeb's previous term of office. Many Negroes felt that if reelected in 1967 he would enact similar laws, which would induce further

segregation. So, when the sanitation strike occurred and Loeb did not recognize the wants of the workers, most Negroes felt this was a direct attack on the power structure of the Negro community. Thus, the Negro leaders sought to unify the Negro community by making, I feel, the sanitation strike, a racial issue. This racial issue was in the form of a boycott of all downtown businesses.

Marches were staged for two weeks in hopes of getting the whole community aware of the problem, but the city council showed an ambiguous attitude towards the bargaining forces of the sanitation workers. Thus, Martin Luther King was asked to help in the problem. His march, a peaceful one in am resulted in a riot last Thursday.

The ministers (Negro) of this city are partly in fought of this riot. I say this for several reasons. Although Rev. Kyles and Lawson openly advocated that they did not have the thuggish elements in the march, when it began, they did go to the various high schools and encouraged the students to leave school and participate in the march. This fact was an indication that they were encouraging trouble.

D.M. – 2

I feel it would have been different if the ministers had constantly been organizing the students for the march, but that they had not. Thus, these students for all intentional purposes was [sic] similar to a mob. They were unorganized and many of them came into the march for the purpose of looting. Thus, the Negro ministers were in fault as well as the looters. Many people might oppose this view, for Loeb is still a central figure in the strike and in the cause of the “riot.” I say this for many Negroes felt he could have recognized the union. This would have avoided much conflict by giving the workers a bargaining agent who would, thus, serve as mediator for the needs of the workers.

However, there is another aspect of the minister’s contribution to the march. In the beginning of the strike, the racial issue, was not involved. It was just a union worker and city council problem. When the NAACP entered the problem, they sought to make the problem a race issue. Thus, their strategy was toward making the downtown businesses come to grips with problem. This was done in the form of a boycott which was to unify the Negro community and make the larger community put pressure on the council to recognize the workers’ demands. This worked, little, thus the stage was set for last Thursday’s march.

A.R. – 1

There are two main topics which I would like to discuss concerning the events surrounding the “riots” in Memphis Tenn. March 28 and 29, 1968. The first is the “mutation” of the news brought about through the unyielding efforts of the communications “services” of Memphis, Tenn. And Jackson, Miss. And the second is to substantiate the “rumors” of incidents of police looting under these disturbances. All of information for the discussion of the first topic was gained through conversations and observations while I was in the state of Mississippi.

In Miss. on the semester break, I was confronted by the news of the “riots” in Memphis by two major sources, they were: (1) conversations with two fellow students, George Gossett, and Uzell Garner, both of whom were also in Miss. and both of whom had received information concerning the riots via long distance telephone. The other choice informational resources was the “Jackson Democratic Times” (the editorial concerning the riots) the leading newspaper of Jackson, Miss.

The information again was gained from Mr. Gossett and Mr. Garner and it was more than contradictory, I contributed this to one major factor, the utterly disgusting jobs of reporting on the part of all the news services of Memphis. Most of the information gained also “overemphasized” particular facets of the riots. For example some of the first reports (by phone) were to the effect that two schools were in flames and ruin; also that there was an even more devastating blow thrown at Beale St.; and finally a curfew had been set for five o’clock. Later reports told of less damage to all three sites (Beale St., Hamilton and Melrose Schools) but even these reports were exaggerations.

A.R. – 2

These reports were of “bricking” and burning of certain portions of the schools.

There were, I believe two basic conclusions that can be drawn from the total amount of information received. (1) that the destruction by “Negroes” in “Negro neighborhoods” was overplayed and that (2) there was very little mention of the role of the N.P.D. (Memphis Police Dept.) in their instigation or participation in the events surround the riots. (Instigation can be equivocated with the blocking of Main at Beale St. and the shouting of profanities at the crowd. Just to name one of the numerous incidents.)

Secondly, the editorial which appeared in the March 29, 1968 edition of the “Jackson Democratic Times,” was an

attempt by the editor, to connect Rev. Martin L. King directly with the “riot element” of the “March”. In flagrant language the editor spoke of the “peacefulness” of the city (Memphis) before the arrival of King, and suggested if he was not in some contact with these “rioters” why did they pick “his march” to attempt this destruction. (There was also mention of the March on Washington and the “significance” of King’s leadership)

Last but no means least, upon my arrival to Memphis I was again confronted by two friends Mr. Alfonso Williams and Mr. James Whites who informed me of an incident they witnessed Friday, March 29 1968. This was a case of looting, not only by the so-call “rioters” but also the patrolmen called to the [illegible] of the incident. These witnesses saw the officer enter into the store (Mogy’s Grocers-Tillman at Broad Ave) and leave with large amount of beer, cigarettes, and cold cuts, plus other articles. Yet none of the incidents (which this was not the first or last of) were not mentioned by the Memphis news services.

B.P. – 1

### The Inevitable Riot of March 2

A large group of sanitation workers and their supporters met in front of Clayborn Temple to march for a list of grievances that had been set before the mayor and the city council approximately eight weeks before. The leader of this peaceful demonstration was Doctor Martin Luther King, a world renowned Civil Rights leader and a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

The march began at about 11:00am going peacefully along on Pontotoc Street. After a while, we proceeded up Main Street, the heart of the Memphis business district. I was in the midst of the marchers, and could not see anything in the front or back of me. We were on Main only a few minutes before we heard a noise that seem to rock the doors of Heaven. Tear gas had been thrown into crowd by the “police force.” The entire force was called up to assist the marchers along their way to City Hall. We never reached City Hall because everybody started running and shouting after one of our leaders said to turn around and go back to the Temple.

B.P. – 2

My four fellow marchers and I ran for the nearest street, its name I do not remember, and while running I remember laughing to myself because a group of policemen were out-running us trying to get to safety. We tried to make our way back to the temple and on the way there, we ran into this young man who was bleeding profusely from a head injury inflicted by policemen. He finally got a ride to the hospital and we were sick to our stomachs. I went with my closest girlfriend to a phone booth on the corner to call her mother, who was at work, and tell her the awful situation we were in. After the call we remained inside because policemen by the dozens were chasing and beating marchers mostly young men. I could not understand that for I saw no evidence of looting. When we arrived at Clayborn Temple we were asked to go home because we were liable to get picked up for congregating on [illegible] for anything else they could [illegible].

B.P. – 3

By this time policemen were riding around sit in a car with crash helmets and everything. I wonder where would a suspect sit if arrested. We then cautiously made our way back to my friend’s grandfather’s business which was nearby and waited until it was reasonably safe to go home. It was now 12:30pm and we waited there until 3:30pm. While we constantly heard windows breaking, people running, sirens ringing, and police cars racing up and down the streets, in cartoon fashion, in front of us. We were afraid to look outside because guns shots were constantly being heard.

When I got home that evening I was surprised to learn that all of my sisters and brothers had been dismissed from school because of violent outburst, fighting and window breaking due to the presence of groups of angry young men at the schools.

B.P. – 4

The following night, the mayor of our fair city placed a 7:00pm-5:00am curfew on the city of Memphis. Mayor Loeb also deemed it necessary to send for the National Guard and the Highway Patrol. A group of guys that I know decided to set fire to the store in front of our apartment building. The fire department came and escorted by three or four patrol cars effectively did its duty. The next night and for the duration of that week, a [illegible] of National Guardsmen marched in front of that particular store.

All these incidents had an effect on me, however, I expected everything that happened to happen. These things were surprise to the majority of the Negro community and especially the young students here. The same thing could

happen and is happening all over United States. When conditions such as police brutality, a government for the white people, and discrimination at every level—

B.P. – 5

--are brought to a head and become intolerable in the Black Community the result is not very pleasant for anyone. I must say, however, that the time of such a protest in a city will vary in any city but in a “honky” like Memphis where the white people have [illegible] or god-like complexes the protest is liable to last far longer for the people do not care anymore. They want their rights now and will not wait another ten years, they will not wait another five years, the Negroes of the United states will not wait.

J.M. – 1

Where Do We Go From Here?

The question of “what happen now?”, enters one’s mind when he views analytically the aftermath of Thursday’s so-called riot and the riot itself, what started out as a peaceful march turned out into an affair that leaves the white community wondering what happened to our city’s fine race relations and the Negro community answering that race relations in this city never were that good to start with.

The preliminary activities before the march gave but [illegible] indication of what was to happen. People waiting for the arrival of Dr. King had already lined up from Beale and Hernando to Vance and Hernando and were estimated at some six thousand strong. [Illegible] on nearby porches added to those milling around on the sidewalks waiting to join the ranks. Inside the church, at the same time signs were being handed out, a [illegible] black power advocate [a member of a group called the “Invaders”] was admonishing those inside to really get the true meaning of the march. As I walked up and down the street viewing the marchers – teachers, high school and college students, local thugs, labor officials, nuns, religious leaders, and most important, the sanitation workers themselves – I got the feeling that something constructive was about to happen even though a group of boys talked about joining the march to see what they could get out of the stores. At this point, the march marshals, with yellow armbands, called for everyone to get in line so they could get some organization.

At about eleven-thirty, after Dr. King had arrived, the march started and the huge procession marched from Claiborne Temple supposedly onward to City Hall to protest for the grievances of the sanitation workers. Just about the ---

J.M. – 2

---time my portion of the march was a block from Main Street, the first stick went flying through the air and the shattering of plate glass windows was heard. The people ahead broke ranks in the march with no marshals around to keep them in line. The people behind hesitated for an instant not knowing what was going on. The line surged forward again only to have the semi-calmers erupt ten minutes later when the second stick found its mark. Then, in rapid succession the sound of breaking glass was heard. People, in confusion, ran toward all directions – some back toward the church which the leaders urged them to return to, and others north on Main. Those in Main (as I was) met a line of some twenty to thirty policemen linked arm-in-arm to push the pressing crowd back down Beale Street to the church. Those in the end carried rifles and all were equipped with mace, a chemical [illegible]. Bedlam broke loose as the policemen pushed and shoved the crowds back. Strangely enough, the policemen on Beale at the time when the first stick was thrown or even during the ten minute lapse when the succeeding sticks were thrown, but when the crowd threatened to get near the large stores like Rheinberger and Goldsmith, they moved quickly to press the crowds back by brutal force.

In all the chaos, I moved toward Front Street in an opposite direction from the large body of the crowd when a shot rang out in front of the Malco Theater. Soon, people began moving toward Front Street, tears streaming down their faces, the result of being sprayed with mace. As we circled Front to Union, then back to Main, businessmen in their shirtsleeves stared at us with a look more akin to intense dislike than curiosity. A look of fear and aggression was seen here and there in the faces of others.

The police had cordoned off a position of Beale Street, but the ---

J.M. – 3

---part we saw was in shambles. Clothing stores were wiped clean of display merchandise and mannequin lying in the streets. The police were riding up and down the streets having six officers assigned to a car and travelling with motorcycle processions of eight.

The ramification of the initial looting and destruction seemed to be a chain reaction of this sort of activities. Stores in Vance were broken into, furniture stores and corner drugstores, all owned by white merchants, were bricked and looted all over the South Memphis area. An immediate curfew was put in effect over the city and National Guard troops were hurriedly called in from Nashville to quell the disorder. Even though the curfew was in effect Thursday to Sunday, March thirty-first, isolated incidents of vandalism took place. Though the curfew restrictions were relaxed on Saturday and Sunday, the relaxing of the restrictions was into and for whites [illegible]. Negroes were arrested for curfew violation. The lifting in the lull before the [illegible] this week when Dr. King returns to lead what he terms a "truly non-violent march." The question of "what happens now?" is answered by an attitude of "wait and see".

(1) G.H

On March 28, 1968, the entire city of Memphis was asked to participate in an active demonstration dedicated to the cause of the sanitation department strike, which mainly include all Negro workers. This demonstration supposedly [sic] non-violence erupted into a violent movement on the part of its participants. This demonstration was led by the honorable Dr. Martin Luther King. In this paper I will give my opinions, as well as, several people giving their opinion on the riot and the present condition. These are the topic to be dealt with: (1) the cause of the march which turn-out into a small riot, (2) the people's idea about why it was done, (3) and the effect it had on Memphis as a whole.

On this date, March 28, 1968, the honorable Dr. Martin Luther King had planned a march on Memphis. This demonstration was to begin at 10 am. Memphis time but it seemed to be delayed until 11:38 am. One reason that could have caused the riot was the delay.

This delay enable [sic] march participants to obtain means of intoxication. While receiving these means of intoxications, the ideal thing about a riot was in discussion. This ideas rushed through the mind of the participants and this became the talk of the hour.

Another important factor was the incident at Hamilton High School, before the march had started. The word---

(2) G.H

---had reached the members of the march that students were being force [sic] not to participate in this march. This led to rock-throwing and police brutality among students and police officers. Several students were injured with billy-club by the police officers, this made the tension built even higher among the marchers

The finally [sic] reason that really brought about confusion and frustration was the halting of the march by the police officers on Main Street. Tension had reached its peak at this moment and the riot was well underway.

When the riot was over, most people had the same idea, and this was very amazing. Many said, "This is what should have been done long ago," was the opinion of the great majority of participants. One person, not calling any name, said, "Memphis needs to be burned, if not bombed, then get all of those criminals out of office, namely mayor Loeb." One fellow said "Loeb is just a backwards [illegible] mayor with only one intention, to lead Memphis like boss Crump and gain all of the power necessary to do so." I found these people to be serious about the honorable statements they had made concern [sic] Loeb.

I personally attended this march on similar grounds about the city officials of Memphis, the person or persons chiefly responsible for the riot. In listening to the news reports about the strike and reading the newspapers, I got the impression that Loeb had his old southern conservative attitude about ways Negroes could be treated. I formed the idea that Loeb had an old southern slogan "hire a nigger, fire a nigger," type of thing. Well! This really ---

(3)

---made me angry, for a person to think this [illegible]. Especially a person in his position, making a blundering statement that could cost him his job as well as his life.

In observing the news-report I find that many business [sic] suffered greatly from the riot. Thousands of dollars in material and merchandise was report [sic] stolen or misplaced. From their reports I interviewed some of the people that took part in the riot. One young man, whom I will refer to as Mr. X, had this to say, "the riot was started when they stopped the march, because it was stopped somebody had to complete the demonstration, so we just simply called upon the businessmen. This is why I broke windows, this is why I did a little stealing." Not only was this individual standing along on this idea or issue but about 79% of the people I interviewed shared the same common feeling.

The Negro communities felt this was only the beginning. If the law seemed unfair in its effort to serve the communities

in the surrounding Memphis area, and if its necessary that rioting is the solution to a long stream of unfair laws and law-makers, then this is what the Negro communities will have to do, in order to preserve place, justice and to obtain a democratic way of life.

D.J. - 1

[Illegible]...

[Illegible] rioting and looting broke out during [illegible] march for the sanitation workers led by Martin Luther King, 17 year old Larry Payne was one of the many teenagers involved. The rioting and looting which erupted on Beale Street had begun to spread to many other areas and establishments before the police [illegible] were able to get it under control. [Illegible] street branch of Sears & Loeb [illegible] one of the many establishments out. [Illegible] of the Main Street area that was [illegible] looters.

Seventeen year old Larry Payne and others were seen by the police looting Sears. Payne was seen carrying a portable JV and running toward the Fowler Homes area. After leaving the JV along the way, Payne then ran into the basement of the Fowler Homes. The police arrived moments later and questioned Payne's whereabouts. After being killed, patrolman L.D. Jones got his shotgun out of the car and proceeded to the basement.

The patrolman asked the youth to come out with his hands up. The youth then -

D.J. - 2

--- came out with his hands clasped together on top of his head. Jones looked at him for a second or so, and shot him in the stomach. Payne fell to the ground and Jones began to kick him as if to see whether or not he was dead.

By this time the youth's mother had come and Jones ordered her to get back. She fainted and Jones started waving the gun telling everyone to get back and leave. The patrolman was said to have taken his time about calling an ambulance. Payne died within minutes after being shot by Jones. The knife was found in the basement, but apparently Payne wasn't aware of it.

This is an eye witness report of how 17 yr. old Larry Payne was slain by patrolman L.D. Jones on march 28, 1968 during the looting of Sears Roebuck & Co., Third St. branch

--Phyllis Beasles (13 yrs) as told to Elizabeth Doe--

JJ. - 1

On March 28, 1968 the anger and dissatisfaction of the black community in Memphis represented by about five hundred young people burst into the destruction of life and property in a march led by Martin Luther King. More than twenty-thousand Memphians were present to protest in the form of a non-violent yet militant march from Clayborn Temple Church, located at 280 Hernando, down Beale to Main Street to Poplar where the return to the church would be by way of Second Street. Traffic had been cleared from those streets and about five hundred policemen were stationed in and around the area. At approximately eleven-thirty am the city had experienced its first large scale race riot. By mid-afternoon Memphis was being patrolled by policemen, state troopers, and National Guardsmen. At the close of the day there were about three hundred people arrested, over one hundred fifty injured and one dead.

JJ. - 2

The march was staged primarily in support of the striking sanitation workers. In general the march was to demonstrate the dissatisfaction of the black community with the present "sub equal" conditions.

Among those present were doctors, ministers, teachers, college professors, laborers, and students. There were some whites also included. Even small children were seen participating in the march.

Before the march was underway, helicopters were circling the area. The presence of camera men and reporters added to the restlessness of the crowd. Many student leaders were busy organizing the marchers and passing out signs. About thirty minutes before the march someone spoke to the crowd through the microphone [illegible] of the church. The speaker urged everyone to get on the street and join the others who had already taken position.

Many just stood or wandered aimlessly on the sidewalks.

JJ - 3

The presence of helicopters, cameramen, reporters with speeches given by a group of so called extremist student leaders tended to strengthen the hatred toward Mayor Loeb. If not sooner, when the march started there was a distinct feeling of "togetherness" among all blacks present. The younger people exhibited this feeling by cheering and shouting hostile expressions toward the Mayor.

While at the starting point, rumors spread. This contributed to the feeling of dissatisfaction that had now generalized toward the white power structure. A gradual deepening of hostilities occurred during the march from Clayborn Temple to Beale Street. When we reached Main Street we were ordered to turn back by policemen. A possible and likely reason was because many of the young demonstrators had armed themselves ---

JJ - 4

---with sticks. Upon the breakage of one window a type of chain reaction took place in the form of destruction, thus marking the beginning of a riot.

Looting, destruction of property, and attacks on policemen were simultaneously taking place. Tailoring shops were relieved of much if not all of their merchandise. One youth had acquired seven suits. Package stores were damaged. Liquor was stolen and much of the stock was broken. A policeman who had been separated from his comrades was being chased by angry youths. Yet even in the mass confusion the spirit of "togetherness" was apparent. Black youths from different neighborhood who had previously been violent toward each other joined destructive forces in a common cause, 'to get white.'

During the [illegible] the sound of rattle fire filled the air. Women, girls, old men, and children were being marched by policemen. After observing the unnecessary use of force, previous non-violent citizens began to take of arming themselves and returning to fight.

The shift to violence cannot be directed toward only one source but rather many reasons. Revenge is probably the most common "why" to resort to violence. The policemen in Memphis have achieved a reputation for being extremely brutal especially in the black community. The riot gave the policemen's victims a chance to "[illegible]." Also a disgust with the power structure finds a scapegoat in the policemen, the symbol of authority. Because these two observations are not proven facts in all cases it is not meant to appear so; nevertheless, they are found to be true in many instances.

Violence attempted to illustrate the seriousness of the problem. Non-violent marches just don't have the impact of a violent protest.

Since non-violent protests failed to force the power structure to satisfactorily solve the problem, many members of the black community believe violence to be only an alternative.

"Nothing to Lose"

Many blacks turned to violence for still another reason, that being dissatisfaction of course. Due to a lack of jobs, insufficient wages, poor housing and police brutality just to mention a few of the black Memphis' grievances. Violence was accepted with the attitude of "nothing to lose." For these people violence is the only way to force the power structure to adhere to their demands.

The harm that comes to innocent citizens is regrettable; nevertheless, in the war for total equality, many innocent citizens will be killed and injured. On the day of the march the sanitation workers had been peacefully protesting for forty seven days. No satisfactory solution was in sight. The black community had become tired and angry. Tension was building. A riot was the product although the riot didn't provide an instant solution if any but it is evident that it helped [illegible] a tremendous amount of pressure on the Mayor and the whole power structure of the city.

One might ask how a riot could put pressure on our city officials. During the three day curfew period the sale of beer was discontinued. Even before and during the curfew national Guardsmen were brought to Memphis.

JJ. - 8

The cost of these troops was between twenty and forty dollars per day per man. Also one must not forget the damage to property, (business) which was directed toward white establishments. The total cost of the violence was at least estimate (4/1/68) over two million dollars. These observations are almost incomparable when the threat of another or other riots enter into the situation. Compared to [illegible] and Detroit the Memphis riot was small scaled. Also because of the Mayor's refusal to grant a dues check-off and thus the formal recognition of a sanitation workers' union the possibility of another riot is all the more probably. It is easier now for a riot to take place because the "ice has been

broken.”

JJ. – 9

Of course riots serve not as a solution in themselves but rather as a tactic just as marching but more “action provoking.” Should boycotts and other non-violent protests fail, riots are a forced-choice alternative. This is not to condone violence or to convey that violence is the way of achieving equality but when non-violence fails it is again our only choice or simply remain satisfied with sub-equal citizenship. If non-violent protests prove unsuccessful, as is the present conception of many blacks, youth and old, riots will continue to occur.

W.C. – 1

A College Student Response to the Recent Civil Disorder in Memphis, Tenn.

On March 28, 1968, Memphis was shaken with one of the worst civil disorders it has ever had in its history. The civil disorder I am referring to is the recent riot which Dr. Martin Luther King participated in with several thousand people. The disorder which has been labeled by many as a riot, occurred in downtown Memphis because 1,300 striking sanitation workers and their sympathizers march in protest to the unfair practice of the Mayor and city administration. The strikers protesting against low wages, unfair labor practices and generally a downgrade of human respect decided to voice their protest. They called upon the community, white and black and received very much support. Then why did rioting (as called by local news media) occurred if they felt their protest was ---

---was valid and had a majority of the community backing them? Why was Dr. King blamed for the actions of a few people in the march when he was only asked to march with the strikers and their sympathizers? Finally, what was the atmosphere within the city and what provoked the people/law enforcement to create a [riot] civil disorder in Memphis?

Memphis had been known throughout the nation as the “City of Good Abode.” But hardly was this true to the black people of Memphis and especially the low income blacks. The former city administrators had used all legal “tricks possible to keep down the black people and gain national pride as a city that could settle their differences over the conference tables without incidents.

But what was happening to the black people in being the victims of legal tricks.

Until February, 1968 the people of the black community had tried many times with very little success to break through the white power legal tricks to gain opportunities due to them that was being denied. Finally, the sanitation workers grouped and organized to show their protest of the many years of discontent, of working conditions and inhumane treatment. So they walked off their job in what the city of Memphis called an illegal strike.

After a first round [illegible] with the mayor and city administration, the strikers refused their offers. {Offer – “Go back to work and I will take care of you. I have always kept my word and I have always [illegible] fair with you”). The strikers decided to march to the City Hall to show their protest to the city and mayor. This was their first mass march. The march ended with uncalled for Police brutality upon---

W.C. – 4

---the strikers because they were protesting against the white power structure that had for years kept them in a boy’s place.

From this incident many ill feelings grew. Both from the white and mostly from the black militants who did not at that time march. Many whites ill feelings grew because many black fought back because they feel they were suffering unnecessary Police brutality.

Seeing the problem they were faced with, the leaders of the strikers sought help from outstanding civil right leaders, Union Leaders and local church leaders. Many came and gave their support, funds and energy for their cause. Among them to come was the most widely known Civil Right leader of them all, Dr. Martin Luther King.

Dr. King was to march with the strikers and their followers, not to lead or plan the march, as the news media said that he did. Because Dr. King only marched ---

W.C. – 5

---and did not plan the march, elements that were not needed in proceeding of the march developed. This led to disorder which the police dept. took the advantage of to brutalize innocent people.

There are many versions as to how the disorder actually came about on the day of the so called riot. Many people says that a white man hit a colored marcher and this provoked the young militants to break away from the main body of marchers to return their [illegible] up protest. Other says that the people that were actually involved in the looting, or breaking of glass were not of the march. However, if one really looks clearly at the problem or incident, there were approx. 23,000 people in the march, yet only 150 to 200 were arrested for rioting. Damage was done only on one street and most of this was glass broken with a few clothes taken.

By now you can see why I called---

W.C. – 6

---the incident a civil disorder and not a riot. Had not Dr. King and the leaders of the march asked the people to return to the original place where the march began, the entire downtown shopping and business area would have been destroyed by the 23,000 people.

In regard to the brutalized beatings that many people were inflicted with the local new media did everything possible to cover this up. However, the National News Media was present and they explained all of the brutal and inhumane treatment the marchers met by the police dept. If this is true and it is the city of Good Abode why did National coverage of your problem be ejected across the nation? It appears to me that there is and always has been a contradiction of your title and how it is being shown throughout the world and nation that Memphis – the city of Good Abode – is really a city of Racism.

L.O. – 1

On March 28, 1968, Dr. Martin Luther King arrived in Memphis to lead a protest march in behalf of the sanitation workers. The march originated due to the partial treatment of the sanitation workers. But because of circumstances. I was unable to participate in the march, a march that I deeply believe that it was altogether fitting and proper. Because of my absence I am unable to give a [illegible] to what took place in Memphis on Thursday, but I was able to get the comments of a business into how he felt toward the incident that occurred in the city of “good abode.”

With his business situated in a predominantly Negro neighborhood and a victim of the incident. With his merchandise [illegible] the sidewalk and his windows broken, he responded to the questions in this respect, “the march and the looting and smashing of windows was an [illegible] plot to give the colored man a chance to destroy or [illegible] white business and to avenge the mayor for his actions. King is a man of poor leadership ability and should not have the right to have a demonstration; but nevertheless, the march should never have taken place because it had no value.”

By what way do you mean the march had no value?

L.O – 2

I [illegible] that there was no for a demonstration response the policy of our mayor, in totally [illegible] Mayor Loeb actions are right and is with his constitution in sights to deal with the situation as he sees fit. The mayor is dealing with the problem sufficiently.”

From talking with this merchant of great wealth and heard of animosity feels that this protest and other protest are “[illegible] because it hurts them [illegible]. There should be extreme measures taken to prevent these types of incidents. Measures such as extreme police [illegible] prosecute these destructive people to the [illegible]. Such organization was the N.A.A.C.P, [illegible] and above all the Memphis militants, the Invaders because they can be detrimental to the city and cities. Businessmen [illegible] these types of incidents, they cannot come up with reasons why the Negro should protest, they believe the Negro should be satisfied with what they have.

But in conclusion I give my honest opinion to the situation and its event. I feel that the demonstration was only a small way of protesting the way we have been treated and mistreated and now we are rebelling rebellion [illegible]. With the prevailing system of discrimination there is going to be boycotts, demonstrations, and perhaps violence to secure our liberty. Discrimination creates a social problem among the Negro with [illegible]---

L.O – 3

---for us to destroy this social problem we must and will destroy discrimination. The only for the “black man” to stop

protesting is to give the "black man" what he is protesting for and that is "equal rights" full equal rights.

S.M. – 1

The march that took place here in Memphis was the starting point of much police brutality to many law abiding citizens.

After talking to some of the persons involved, I decided that the police were using this as a time for getting revenge on all Negroes.

One person that I talked with told of how the police wandered into a restaurant and brutally beat many of the patrons who were eating. He stated that they entered and asked the owner to close and all customers to leave. But it seems as though they didn't move fast enough so the police began beating and dragging people out.

After this, they began attacking the cars parked on the lot. Windshields of cars were shattered beyond repair.

S.M – 2

When the police had finished their beatings, they arrested these people in a bloody [illegible] beaten condition and took them to jail in a crowded paddy wagon.

During this riot, the police [illegible] their power to relieve personal tension. If they had no respect or like for Negroes they showed it very plainly. Many of these people will wear the scars of that day for life, not only visibly but inwardly as well.

[Illegible] what will be done about these [illegible] injustices? Probably nothing, since this is mainly a race problem and each race will stick together. Therefore, we can only hope that this will never happen again, especially here in Memphis.

U.G. 1

#### The Pastor's Report

On Sunday, March 31, 1968, our pastor, Rev. T.R. Buckmaster, reported several of the incidents in which he witnesses at the scene of supposedly Negro riot. He reported that the disturbance was not altogether carried by young people, but age group participated.

According to his report, tension began, however, at the church by the young and continued building on into the actual march; soul brothers began throwing things on Beale Street and other frustrated Negroes and white followed in this great activity. This is however action was played, some broke windows on one side of street and crossed to break other, while others came behind and looted. He reported that he one young man go into Lansky Brothers and tried on different pants to get his size.

Also, the police activity was some unnecessary because usually they beat the innocent and seemed afraid to apprehend the lawbreakers. He also said that felt because of the number of policemen created the tension among the mass of Negro dissenters.

He was amazed at the Christians reaction to the disturbance: "Militant reactions became a part of Christian mind within an hour," he said.

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#### NOTE TO READER:

ALL OF THESE DOCUMENTS WERE WRITTEN BETWEEN APRIL 1, 1968 AND APRIL 3, 1968. MARTIN LUTHER KING WAS ASSASSINATED ON APRIL 4, 1968.

MPJ

