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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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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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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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Result of the incident.

Afterward [illegible] part before before to break glasses along Vance. I feel that this was done through [illegible] policeman 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] Lomore. Policemen rushed in, about fifteen cars and the chief, and ordered people off

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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.