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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 LeMoyne, 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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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 place [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, obtain [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 nife 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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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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