

# The Memphis Riot

J.W.-1

I shall give an account of the riot and how it affected 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 too 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 am., I was surprised to see a 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 there were numerous black power advocates in the crowd. After the march had begun and I had marched to Beale and Second one of the ministers with a portable public address system

came down the street telling everyone to turn around and go back for Clagborn Temple, at this time I was not aware of what had happened in India, but only seconds later the policemen with nightsticks as long as baseball bats and gas masks began to march and point their weapons and fill in 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 shotguns were a bit faster than most of the now fleeing crowd could run. With every one now running back down Beale street, some of the fellow around me began throwing sticks at the windows along Beale, even some of my friends began to throw sticks and get in on the rioting, 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 nightsticks.

After reaching Clagborn 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.

making up a small crowd, but soon the policemen came and 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 gas 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 to go 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 some of the worse beating given during the whole out-break by about twelve policemen, who beat these young men (and some little boys) they were beaten without mercy, until they were knocked unconscious, then after finally stopping they called some of the friends of the beaten men from across

the street with this remark, "come on" and  
 get their mitts. I got into the  
 of other large cities in the  
 violence in the streets. I  
 start in the morning of the  
 to see to it that I was  
 to see all of the fellows that  
 park with all kinds of stolen  
 merchandise. It  
 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  
 eyes and running  
 nose. With this my day as a  
 marcher and  
 a riot witness ended.