

On March 28, 1968 at 10:00 A.M. my telephone 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 tricking 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.

We 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 an uproar and many of the students had already left 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 wild young Negro men jump the fence coming toward the school building. They had black scarfs on their heads and ~~had~~ were

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 to go. These men seemed to have started the conflict at their school.

The drone around for about 30 minutes and I saw many things happening that I could not believe. On the corner of Vance and Saw the Joe'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 in the corner yelling, "Burn, Baby, 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 sirens; evidently no one called to report the fires. While the people were standing and yelling about 8 police cars zoomed by and stopped instantly at Vance and Hannaf. 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

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, but 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, "Hey, 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?" We told them that we were going home and that we lived on that street. He said for us to run home quickly and he meant 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 P.M. 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

men around 4:00 P.M. 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 started in the Negroes taking in Memphis. Now we the younger Negro generation will not stand for the treatment our parents have received. Prisons have been cut out for high school children, what for, could it be the integration 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 a fire 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 fact power in Memphis.

No Negro stands a fighting chance in Memphis if his foe is white. Therefore, I say, let the 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.