

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 force.

The Physical atmosphere however, was not indicative of the emotional atmosphere which pervaded the city. Tension was high, especially between supporters of the Sanitation Striker, 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 Olaybourn Temp."

The rumor began with a loud scream: "Get your children from school, get them quick before they are killed. The white folks is murdering them in their classes. O Lord, what are we going to 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 school in the county.)

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

