

# Memphis Riot of 1968

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Dr. Martin L. King led Memphis' greatest mass march on Thursday afternoon, March 28, 1968. The purpose of this march was to win support for the weary sanitation workers. These men request a small raise in salary, dues check-off, and a host of other conditions regarding their plight. The City Council refused those conditions on the ground that it was illegal for the public department to strike. This so-called peaceful march turned out to be a riot. A group of young Negroes fled from the march and began throwing bottles, and looting. The policemen immediately took action. They started beating and gasing with great force to get control of the so-called mob.

Some incidents during the riotous crowd that did not reach the news were relatively numerous. One incident included a tear-torn Negro woman trying to protect her baby in an effort to get out of the policeman's way. He was beating her and using very unfavorable language, and almost hitting her child.

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A group of Negro boys seeing this became furious and began attacking the policeman.

Other incidents include blacked eyes, swollen faces, head injuries and tear gas used in the face. During the march, which resulted from the march, many Negroes were subjected to foul language, beating, and were driven home when caught or stopped on the streets.

Since I did not attend the march, my information is based upon people who actually participated and witnessed these reports from observation, reading, and listening to others, I have concluded that the strike is probably the best thing that could have happened to this deep-south city. This alone should open the eyes of many Negroes and liberal Whites to the fact that there is too much hatred and discrimination in our city. Memphis has always given the Negroes enough privileges to keep him quiet, enough privileges so that he cannot complain too much. It is time for the Negro to consider that the majority of their women are maids and too many men are garbage men and yard boys.

It is tragic that the workers have to go to such extreme methods to plead their cause. When the amount of damage, cost of National guards, and police expenditures could have been given to the sanitation workers as a raise in salary.