

## **M.W. – 1**

### Memphis Riot of 1968

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 traditions regarding their plight. The city council refused these conditions on the ground that it was illegal for the public department to strike. This so called peaceful march turn [sic] out to be a riot. A group of young Negroes fled from the march and began throwing bottles, and looting. The policemen immediately took actions. They started beating and gassing with great force to get control of the so called mob.

Some incidents during the (illegible) crowd that did not reached [sic] the news were relatively numerous. One incident includes 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 killing her child.

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

Other incidents include blacken eyes, swollen faces, head injuries and tear gas was used in the face. During the curfew, 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 happen [sic] to this deep-south city. This alone should open the eyes of many Negroes and liberal whites of 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 the [sic] 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 Guard, and police expenditures could have been given to the sanitation workers as a raise in salary.

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