

On Sunday, March 21, 1968 the participants in the march on City Hall, led by Dr. Martin Luther King began to gather at Clayborne Temple on Howard street at about 9:30 AM. This was the starting point of the march. People of all ages and physical conditions were present. There were elementary, high school, and college students, professional people, common laborers, white liberals and sanitation workers. All of these people were marching and protesting the rights of the sanitation workers to have a union which was denied by city officials headed by Mayor Henry Loeb. The people, including the blind and crippled carried signs that read: "I am a man: Justice and equality for all men." "Jobs, jobs jobs", and "Desegregation for the sanitation workers."

Between 10 AM. and 11:30 AM., about the time the march began, small groups and their spokesmen formed and advocated what the participants in the march should do. The groups either advocated violence or non-violence. The majority of the groups that advocated violence were composed of boys and men, ranging from the ages of about 15-35 years of age. Most of these had been drinking and they encouraged the participants to, loot, burn, beat, kill and other forms of (99)

violence and vandalism. The group that I marched along with L.S. was the Black Students Association of Memphis State University. The group's spokesman was Eddie Lee Jenkins (age 20) a friend and spokesman of Memphis State. He encouraged a peaceful march, but insisted that the marchers were obligated to protect the women and children who were in the streets from violence. At about 11:30, due to the late arrival of the march, the march began with stops and go at intervals.

By the time we reached Second St., we could hear shouting "They're looting the stores!" From that moment, boys and men began breaking windows out and down down, and started grabbing clothes, jewelry, musical instruments and liquor.

Shortly, we heard the calm voice of Reverend Lawson asking, "Please don't panic; turn around and march back to the temple." He repeated this for about two minutes. As the people ran and panicked like ants from a disturbed ant hill, Eddie and I tried to stop them, but we found that this was in vain and parted.

Eddie and I hitched a ride with nine other students from Memphis State and rode over to Sister Homes. On our walk home Eddie and I discussed the situation and how the riot could have possibly been prevented.

We concluded that the riot could have <sup>possibly</sup> been prevented, if the marchers had been well orientated before before the march, therefore knowing how to react at the first out-

break of violence, preventing injuries to themselves and policemen  
and preventing further violence that led to the riot.

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The crowd assembled at the market  
to await the beginning of the march  
on behalf of the sanitation workers. Dr.  
Martin Luther King Jr. was scheduled to arrive  
in Memphis at 10:30 a.m. to lead the march.  
The crowd consisted of men, women, and  
children of all ages.  
Due to the light difficulties Dr. King  
arrived late but the march had  
started without him. However, upon his  
arrival the crowd took into cheer. There  
was not a great disturbance that Dr.  
King had a difficult time calming the  
crowd. After he managed to quiet the  
members and make his way to the  
front, then the march was officially on  
its way.  
The march travelled the route of  
Memphis Avenue to Third Street and  
continued to Beale Street. During the  
time the march was quiet, calm and  
completely unopposed while carrying their  
signs and banners. They were  
highly disciplined and a very good  
example of non-violence.