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The March That Turned into a Riot

On Tuesday, March 28, 1968 I participated in the march on city hall, led by Dr. Martin Luther King began to gather at Clayborn Temple on Hernando Street at about 9:30 A.M. This was the starting point of the march. People of all ages and physical conditions were present. (illegible) used 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 (illegible) signs that said, "I am a man," "Justice and equality for all men," "Jobs, jobs, jobs," and (illegible) for the sanitation workers."

Between 10 A.M. and 11:30 A.M., about the time the march began, small groups and then (illegible) formed and advocate 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, (illegible), kill and other forms of

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violence and vandalism. The group that I marched along with was the Black Students Association of Memphis State University. The groups (illegible) Lee Jenkins (age 20) a friend and sophomore at Memphis State. He (illegible)march, but insisted that the (illegible) obligated to (illegible) the (illegible) children in (illegible). At about 11:30, due to the late arrival of Dr. King, the much higher (illegible).

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

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 five minutes. So the people ran and panicked [sic] 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 mile with (illegible) other students from Memphis State and rode (illegible). On our walk home Eddie and I discussed the situation and (illegible). 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 possibly been prevented if the marchers had been well orientated before the march, therefore knowing how to meet at the first out-

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break of violence, preventing injuries to themselves and policemen and preventing further violence that led to the riot. 101