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Abusive, insulting language and brutality by Policeman [sic], and looting by teenagers ran rampage in the city of Memphis on March 28, 1968.

Sometime between 11:30 A.M. and 12:30 P.M. a Negro protest march was proceeding up Beale Street to Main Street when teenagers and young adults started breaking windows, the marchers were instructed by Mr. Jesse Turner, President of the Memphis [sic] of the N.A.A.C.P. to turn around and march back to the church on Hernando Street because of the rioting and looting. I turned to march back to the church, but seeing the long line of people behind me and hearing the breaking of windows and with sticks and rocks flying through the air, I decided to break from the crowd and go up McCall Street. Some of my friends and I crossed Main Street and started up McCall where we were confronted by police officers and told to "get on back down there gals." We tried to explain to the officers that we wanted no part of the violence that was going on down on Main Street.

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I could see sticks and rocks flying through the air. At this time the police officers ran pass [sic] us and toward the crowd and we turned and ran to a priest who was standing by a car across the street, who escorted us to Front Street.

In interviews with several people who remained with the marchers, I was able to secure the following account of what happened.

A Mr. James Jones stated that he was standing by his place of business on Beale Street after the street was practically cleared when a policeman told him to "get your damn black ass off the street." When he replied to the officer that his abusive language was no necessary, he was knocked to the ground by this officer and joined by three more officers who beat him.

Riding in an ambulance behind the march was Dr. W.E. Smith who stated that he observed a young man who took a stick and broke the window in a liquor store.

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He and other teenagers started taking liquor from the stores across the street he saw the police beating a man who was in front of his store. He beat the man, pushing him back into his store finally knocking him to the floor; while young adults were running in and out of the store with merchandise.

The destructive action and the looting that took place on that Thursday cannot be condoned by any law abiding citizen. The question remaining, is why did it happen? The news media would lead one to believe that Dr. King and the other leaders of the march were responsible, saying that they deserted the march. This statement is untrue. Dr. King and the other ministers were never actively leading the march. Teenagers were running along the sidewalk and in front of the leaders. Dr. King and the ministers did what any law abiding citizen would have done when violence erupted. The answer to why this riot occurred, I think, can be found in the denial of basic [working] request of the sanitation workers,

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The many under lying grievances in the Negro community and the general mistrust Negroes have for whites. All of these factors precipitated an amstophere [sic] of tension which resulted in violence.

The abusive language and brutality of the policeman were uncalled for. I have concluded that the policemen for the most part are a group of racist [sic] and cowards. The insulting language used was not necessary and would not have been used on any other race. The brutality was never committed by one officer alone. It was always two or three in a group beating one unarmed person. I feel that if any one answer could be attributed as a cause of the riot, it would have to be the feeling of resentment and mistrust from both sides.

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