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“The Memphis March that Turned into a Riot”

In this paper I shall attempt to give some point a [illegible] on what triggered the riot in Memphis March 28, 1968 about 12 o'clock which had all intention of being a march for the sanitation workers and also other willing people who wanted to march in their behalf. Also information from people interviewed who actually saw the destruction of our city Memphis. And finally, things that occurred in my neighborhood.

As I have stated in my introduction, the march for the striking sanitation workers took place March 28, 1968 in downtown Memphis. At this time LeMoyne College was having its spring vacation so that left me at home. I was asked by one of my friends who attends Owen's College and was going to march. I told her without hesitation no. I was not going to march, not because I didn't agree with the sanitation workers marching for their rights but I was just plain scared to march because I ---

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---just knew all those people who were going to be downtown at the march. Some of them wasn't just down their [sic] in behalf of the sanitation workers.

On this day my sisters went to school. A lot of parents didn't allow their children to attend that day because Dr. King had asked for a work and school stoppage that particular day and these parents probably thought something would happen to their children. Nothing really happen at the school my sisters attend but all the children get excited because of the things happening to children who attended school that day. I was sitting in my yard when a friend of mine came over and asked me had I heard two children got killed at Hamilton School, if I had known this was a mere rumor, I wouldn't have gotten so excited. My aunt called and told me to go and get my sisters because they were scared and wanted to come home. They thought people would come over to their school rioting like they were doing at other schools. At that instant I started up the street looking for them, just after ---

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---I started over the hill they were coming home scared and confused. We went in the house, locked all the doors and turned the radio to get all the information we could. And from what I heard going on in Memphis I was certainly glad I didn't march. Later another friend called and [illegible] had me over to the school in his neighborhood and ran all the children and out of school. He said the children were running everywhere and the teachers were scared and locked in their rooms.

Things were still occurring all day in the Memphis area. That morning my cousin, who marched, told me how it actually was downtown. She said she never in her life saw so much confusion and looting. The rioters were tearing Memphis up, department stores, shoe stores, and jewelry stores. In other words they were destroying Memphis. She believed the march which later turned into a riot, was triggered by the rumor that some children had got killed at Hamilton and the rioters wanted to get revenge.

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But I told her that might have triggered the riot but I think the people who started the riot saw a good chance to do some damage and did it. I think they used the march for the sanitation workers as a front to do things they wanted to do where they couldn't get away with such as looting without the march because many thousands of people were marching downtown and the riot starters could almost get away with anything.

Also another cousin of mine who lives near Lemoyne said people probably those who were the ones started the rioting were carrying T.V. sets and Hi-Fi's down the alley and police officers were right behind them.

This incident I am about to give some information happen in my neighborhood about 1 a.m. Saturday morning. My neighbor's house was set on fire, he is a sanitation workers, I don't know for sure but it was said that two men set it on fire. But I do know that the police arrested them. While the fire department was trying to put the fire out

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---one of the men who was arrested rolled his car on the water hose to keep the water from coming through to put the fire out. Policemen and detectors were all over the place asking questions and getting people out the streets because it was a curfew on that morning.

In concluding my information about the happenings that occurred in Memphis, I would say what happen to our city was bound to happen one day with all the tension and pressure. There have been riots in almost all the cities up north etc. People just didn't believe there would or could be a riot in Memphis because they thought they had everything under control here in Memphis. But it did happen to Memphis March 28, 1968 and as of now we don't know what the overcome will be.