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The Inevitable Riot of March 2

A large group of sanitation workers and their supporters met in front of Clayborn Temple to march for a list of grievances that had been set before the mayor and the city council approximately eight weeks before. The leader of this peaceful demonstration was Doctor Martin Luther King, a world renowned Civil Rights leader and a Nobel Peace Prize winner.

The march began at about 11:00am going peacefully along on Pontotoc Street. After a while, we proceeded up Main Street, the heart of the Memphis business district. I was in the midst of the marchers, and could not see anything in the front or back of me. We were on Main only a few minutes before we heard a noise that seem to rock the doors of Heaven. Tear gas had been thrown into crowd by the "police force." The entire force was called up to assist the marchers along their way to City Hall. We never reached City Hall because everybody started running and shouting after one of our leaders said to turn around and go back to the Temple.

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My four fellow marchers and I ran for the nearest street, its name I do not remember, and while running I remember laughing to myself because a group of policemen were out-running us trying to get to safety. We tried to make our way back to the temple and on the way there, we ran into this young man who was bleeding profusely from a head injury inflicted by policemen. He finally got a ride to the hospital and we were sick to our stomachs. I went with my closest girlfriend to a phone booth on the corner to call her mother, who was at work, and tell her the awful situation we were in. After the call we remained inside because policemen by the dozens were chasing and beating marchers mostly young men. I could not understand that for I saw no evidence of looting. When we arrived at Clayborn Temple we were asked to go home because we were liable to get picked up for congregating on [illegible] for anything else they could [illegible].

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By this time policemen were riding around sit in a car with crash helmets and everything. I wonder where would a suspect sit if arrested. We then cautiously made our way back to my friend's grandfather's business which was nearby and waited until it was reasonably safe to go home. It was now 12:3pm and we waited there until 3:30pm. While we constantly heard windows breaking, people running, sirens ringing, and police cars racing up and down the streets, in cartoon fashion, in front of us. We were afraid to look outside because guns shots were constantly being heard.

When I got home that evening I was surprised to learn that all of my sisters and brothers had been dismissed from school because of violent outburst, fighting and window breaking due to the presence of groups of angry young men at the schools.

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The following night, the mayor of our fair city placed a 7:00pm-5:00am curfew on the city of Memphis. Mayor Loeb also deemed it necessary to send for the National Guard and the Highway Patrol. A group of guys that I know decided to set fire to the store in front of our apartment building. The fire department came and escorted by three or four patrol cars effectively did its duty. The next night and for the duration of that week, a [illegible] of National Guardsmen marched in front of that particular store.

All these incidents had an effect on me, however, I expected everything that happened to happen. These things were surprise to the majority of the Negro community and especially the young students here. The same thing could happen and is happening all over United States. When conditions such as police brutality, a government for the white people, and discrimination at every level—

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--are brought to a head and become intolerable in the Black Community the result is not very pleasant for anyone. I must say, however, that the time of such a protest in a city will vary in any city but in a "honky" like Memphis where the white people have [illegible] or god-like complexes the protest is liable to last far longer for the people do not care anymore. They want their rights now and will not wait another ten years, they will not wait another five years, the Negroes of the United states will not wait.

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