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LeMoyne Reflections on Sanitation Strike March pp. 231-233 -- C.D.

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The Way of Infamy

The Way of Infamy was Thursday march 28, 1968. A march had been planned by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in support of the Memphis sanitation workers. The sanitation workers had been on strike for the past seven weeks.

The march began at 10:30 a.m. beginning at Clayborn Temple A.M.E Church are Pontatoc and Hernando. The march leaders informed the marchers, who were approximately 15,000 strong, that the route of the march would head north up Hernando to Beale, West on Beale to Main and north on Main to the City Council's Canchers. The majority of the march never reached Main.

Violence erupted on Beale, at about 1:15 a.m., due to certain youthful elements of the march, destroying storefronts. The initial rupture of violence began when someone ---

--- broke a window at Pope's Clothing store, 159 Beale Street.

Dr. King, the march leader, was told incidents of violence were occurring on Beale and at once tried to stop the march. It was too late. Widespread beating had begun on Beale with lightning speed. Dr. King's march marshalls [mic], Dr. Middlebrook, Dr. William Smith and others tried with the aid of Bull Harris to direct the march to return to Clayborn Temple, I must add with a minimum amount of success.

Those of us who did attempt to reverse our march found ourselves in the mist of tear gas, mace and suringing nightsticks. Men, women and children were being beaten as if they were animals. Police moved in on the marchers as if they were an enemy force attacking Memphis.

About fifteen of us made it back to Clayborn Temple around 1:00 p.m. that morning.

Upon arriving at the Temple I saw policemen shooting tear gas at point blank range into the doors of Clayborn Temple and the Department of Minimum Salary Building next door to the Temple. Women and children were being brought out of the Temple by policemen using bodily force. On Jackson, one of the march marshalls [mic], appeared in the door of the Clayborn Temple and asked all marchers to return home to prevent the possibility of further beatings.