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LeMoyne Reflections on Sanitation Strike March pp. 25-29 -- J.J.

Item Type	Text
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The Memphis Riot

On March 28, 1968, an exceedingly warm and sun shining day, Martin Luther King, arrived at Clayborn Temple on Hernando at 11:15 A.M. (W.D.I.A. News), for the purpose of the march scheduled in (illegible) of the sanitation workers.

There was an estimated crowd of 1500 people gathered for the march. The crowd proceeded from the church in a somewhat orderly but noisy manner. Mixed in the crowd, was those(illegible) to possibly 60, as well as the mixing of the races. As the crowd marched right off of Hernando to Beale (illegible).

I realized that the triggering off of the riot was not from their gathering for the purpose of the march, but (illegible) organized for the disturbance of mankind. Their

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purpose are to intermingle with the crowd in order to make it less obvious of the organizations there. They began by breaking shop windows and looting all they could, between Hernando and main.

The police immediately began taking drastic measures in rendering a quick solution to the disturbance. Such objects as blackjacks, slapsticks, rifles and mace were used to break the crowd up. The police fired in the air, in order to frighten the looters, they (illegible) of the marches, many who were totally innocent in the (illegible) of the riot. One of the bullets hit a 16 year old, Larry Payne in the stomach. The story as told by his 17 year old girlfriend, who was present at the march, to a friend of mine, was Larry (illegible), and when the sound of windows shattering (illegible) ran in that direction. He had a T.V. in his hands, and when the officer asked him to put it down, he did, but was immediately shot in the stomach. I couldn't believe what I had seen, but it had happened.

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With our attention placed once again on the march, Martin L. King who escorted by other leaders of the march to safety. Meanwhile the policemen (illegible), were working toward clearing the streets and arresting the looters and the trouble makers. It was an event which will linger in the minds of those who were there because such inhuman brutality on the part of the police officers were displaced , unnecessary beating that wasn't printed on even my the press, the vulgar name calling, and the (illegible) officers that were hurt. It was estimated as to about (illegible) injured. But reports from John Gaston Hospital were different. My aunt, Mrs. Randle, age 32, a practical nurse on the day shift , reported that a (illegible) number of police officers were being treated and a few admitted, a number that expected (illegible).

There also were reports from Detroit and (illegible) that (illegible) twisted the press (illegible) the actual news. Mrs. Taylor, age 24, a teacher in Detroit, called her mother, Mrs. Leland, age 42, a neighbor of mine and,

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Stated that the paper there had printed that 300 had participated in the march and (illegible), and that no one was injured, and not much damage was administered to the Downtown section onto Beale. The Milwaukee News, as quoted by Miss (illegible), and the daughter of Mrs. Leland, who is also a teacher, age 26, states: news reached her that Memphis had a little disturbance, not much denial of it, but news got around that a riot was to be underway. A few windows were broken and there were no injuries. After about an hour, the crowd had dispersed and all was quiet once again.

As to my personal reactions, I feel that the riot was necessary, in that the Sanitation workers have been protesting and marching for (illegible) days, and still nothing has come of it with disturbances of this sort, it does give the white citizens of Memphis the idea that we as negro citizens, has taken about all we intend to. Some peaceful agreement will have to be decided on, as strikes of this sort (riots) will always be a part

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of Memphis. Maybe something will be done in the future to better the situations here that are taking place. Until then, I say, "Riot Baby, Riot!!"

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