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LeMoyne Reflections on Sanitation Strike March pp. 201-208 -- P.S.

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The March [Illegible]

This is an account of the things I witnessed during the Memphis riot and my personal reaction to it.

On Thursday March 28, 1968 I arrived at Beale and Hernando about 9:50 am. From there I proceeded to join the Marchers who were lined from Beale down Hernando to Vance.

There I along with about 4,000 other people waited from 10:00 a.m. to 11:20 a.m. We were waiting for the arrival of Dr. Martin Luther King who was to lead the march. During the period of waiting there were quite a few incidents of drinking on the sidelines, many signs were brought past us advocating black power and helicopter- the one that, as of now patrol, the city- kept flying overhead.

I think the period of waiting along with these

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Other incidents helped tire people out and incite some feelings.

About 11:20 a.m. led by the sanitation workers and their leaders, we started walking up to Hernando, turned on Beale and proceeded up toward Main Street. On the way we passed several rows of spectators and policemen. In the middle of the block I witnessed a man passing out wooden sticks about 1 ½ ft. long and 2 inches wide. Next I saw a boy proceed to break out a window in Pape's Men's Shop with one of these sticks. Then I heard what I think was a shot and glass began to splatter over the street. People began to run in all directions, but we were instructed by Rev. Lawson to turn around and walk quietly back to the church.

Things went pretty quickly until we arrived at the church where mace was sprayed outside directly in the eyes of some people and where it entered the church and affected the eyes of most people in the lower part of the sanctuary.

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Once most people were inside we were instructed to find seats in [illegible] could move out in small groups and go to our cars and then go straight home. Many people showed about being sprayed with the mace, and some left before they could be quieted. Announcements were made to locate children who had been lost when the people began to run and show fear.

I left the Church about 12:00 N and got a ride home with one of the men who lived in my neighborhood. His car was parked at Fourth and Vance beside the Loeb's Laundry on the corner of the street. Just as we pulled off John Jones (anonymous) threw a brick in the window of the Laundry. The police patrolled the area but were totally unprepared for the things that occurred. Windows were broken on all the corners in the Fourth and Vance areas except windows

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In the stores of Negro businesses.

When I arrived home about 1:00 p.m., men were fixing the window in the Fish Market across the street from my house. Later that evening the window was broken again. Also the windows in the Loeb's Laundry on the next street from me were broken, garbage cans were lined in the streets to keep the police from getting to these places. Fires were set in front of some white businesses and the police were kept on the run from place to place.

About 11:00 p.m. my grandfather called our house to get my brother to pick him up downtown at the jail. He had been on jury duty that day and they had just been released for that night. However, my brother didn't get off work until 11:30 p.m. and arrived home about 12:15 a.m. At about this time we proceeded to drive to town on our mission. Soon as we turned out of our street on Park Ave. we were signaled by

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By a traffic police car to stop. When my brother stopped they asked him if he knew about the curfew, where were we going and why did it take all three of us to go (my grandmother was in the car) and get my grandfather. After these questions were answered we were told to "go on". We were instructed not to go through Main Street however. On our way back we came through Beale Street which had been boarded up and which was heavily patrolled by police cars. (The Nat'l Guard hadn't arrived).

For the next two days I was taken to work by my brother and picked up around 8:00 at night by my boyfriend. We were never stopped at night but we would see a constant line of police cars patrolling the streets, most of the time four or five cars in a row.

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National Guardsmen were stationed at the shopping center [illegible] Lamar-Airways and around the Loeb's [sic] Barbecue at Park off Lamar.

The school in my community (Orange Mound) was set on fire and many liquor stores were looted over the weekend.

On Saturday night we went to the bowling lanes on Lamar Ave (Cherokee) but we encountered no police cars or no incidents of violence.

Before I tell of my reaction I must mention the fact that I saw several incidents of policemen running to get away from people whom they themselves had tried to push with cars, or to rough up with harsh talk. These people mostly young men, would not be moved by the incidents and a gun was pulled on one police car. I witnessed this and the fact that the car had three policemen

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In it and [illegible] went flying down the street in the other direction when this incident occurred.

In my opinion the police department was totally unprepared for the Memphis "confusion". For one reason most of the cars were stationed in the downtown area in about one spot (for instance from Main + Beale to Main and Court).

I was never personally upset by the confusion, for I believe that since the Mayor will not consider giving the strikers what they want after these constant series of talks that it might take some violence and even bloodshed to open his eyes and the eyes of others who feel that the strikers aren't entitled to the things they are asking for I feel that if this type of solution will hurt the businessman enough for him to put pressure on the Mayor, then that's

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What it will take.

I have gone on as always, none of my ideas about helping others have changed. I still think that everyone should have a fair chance to work to his fullest capacities without limitations put upon him because of his color or incapacity to learn one type of job. I have encountered various incidents of meanness [sic] on my job, but I have just plain ignored this display of ignorance and jealousy because of the intelligence that I might display during these "trying" times.

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