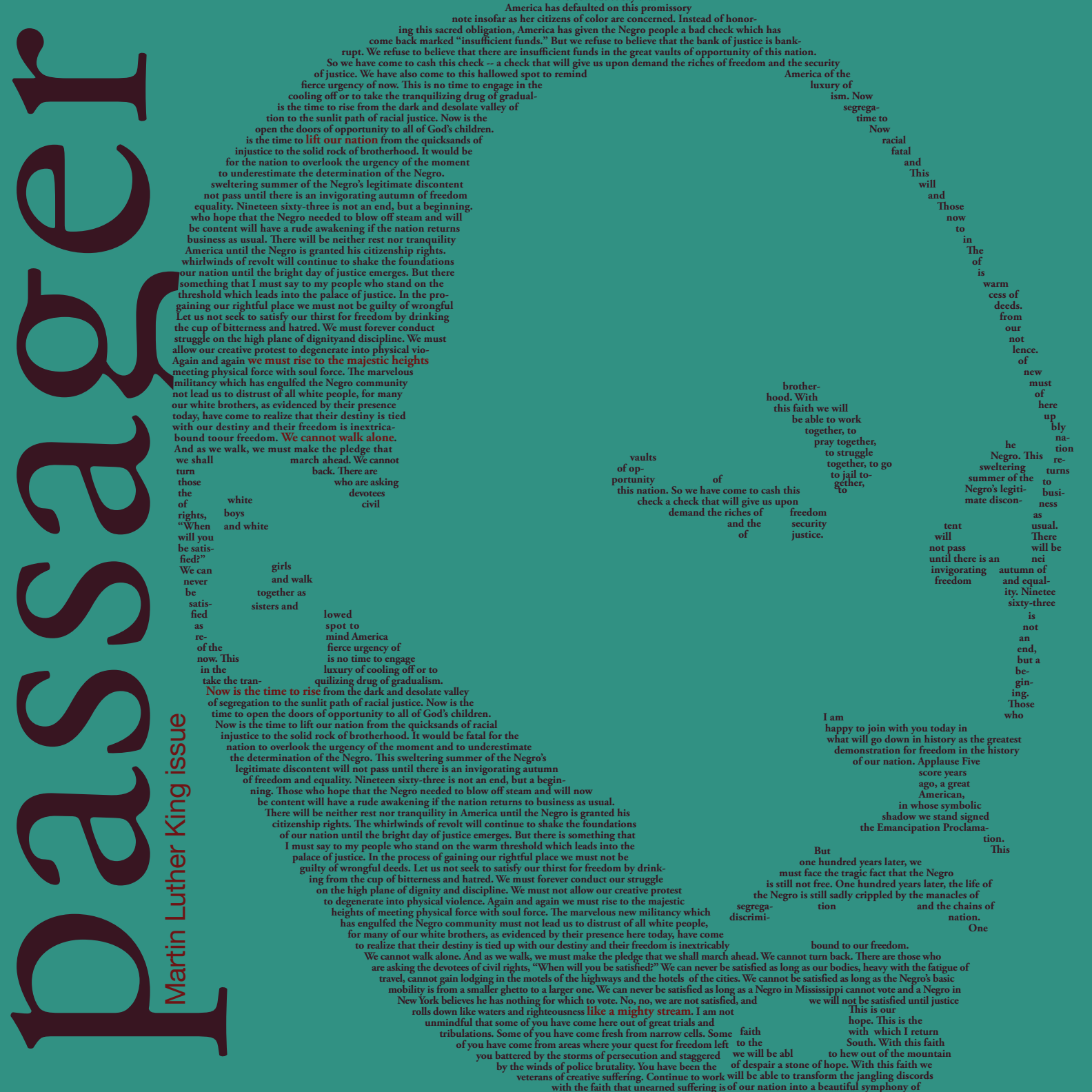
passage
Martin Luther King issue
America has defaulted on this promissory
note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honor-
ing this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has
come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bank-
rupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.
So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security
of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind America of the
fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the luxury of
cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradualism. Now
is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segrega-
tion to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children.
is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial
injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. It would be fatal for the
nation to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate
the determination of the Negro. This sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating autumn
of freedom and equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a begin-
ning. Those who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will now
be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns to business as usual.
There will be neither rest nor tranquility in America until the Negro is granted his
citizenship rights. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations
of our nation until the bright day of justice emerges. But there is something that
I must say to my people who stand on the warm threshold which leads into the
palace of justice. In the process of gaining our rightful place we must not be
guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drink-
ing from the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct our struggle
on the high plane of dignity and discipline. We must not allow our creative protest
to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic
heights of meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous new militancy which
has engulfed the Negro community must not lead us to distrust of all white people,
for many of our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence here today, have come
to realize that their destiny is tied up with our destiny and their freedom is inextricably
bound to our freedom.
We cannot walk alone. And as we walk, we must make the pledge that we shall march ahead. We cannot turn back. There are those who
are asking the devotees of civil rights, "When will you be satisfied?" We can never be satisfied as long as our bodies, heavy with the fatigue of
travel, cannot gain lodging in the motels of the highways and the hotels of the cities. We cannot be satisfied as long as the Negro's basic
mobility is from a smaller ghetto to a larger one. We can never be satisfied as long as a Negro in Mississippi cannot vote and a Negro in
New York believes he has nothing for which to vote. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice
rolls down like waters and righteousness like a mighty stream. I am not
unmindful that some of you have come here out of great trials and
tribulations. Some of you have come fresh from narrow cells. Some
of you have come from areas where your quest for freedom left
you battered by the storms of persecution and staggered
by the winds of police brutality. You have been the
veterans of creative suffering. Continue to work
with the faith that unearned suffering is
America of the
luxury of
ism. Now
segrega-
time to
Now
racial
fatal
and
This
will
and
Those
now
to
in
The
of
is
warm
cess of
deeds.
from
our
not
lence.
of
new
must
of
here
up
bly
na-
he
tion
Negro. This re-
sweltering turns
summer of the to
Negro's legiti- busi-
mate discon- ness
as
tent usual.
will There
not pass will be
until there is an nei
invigorating autumn of
freedom and equal-
ity. Ninetee
sixty-three
is
not
an
end,
but a
be-
gin-
ing.
Those
who
brother-
hood. With
this faith we will
be able to work
together, to
pray together,
to struggle
together, to go
to jail to-
gether,
to
vaults
of op-
portunity
of
this nation. So we have come to cash this
check a check that will give us upon
demand the riches of freedom
and the security
of justice.
I am
happy to join with you today in
what will go down in history as the greatest
demonstration for freedom in the history
of our nation. Applause Five
score years
ago, a great
American,
in whose symbolic
shadow we stand signed
the Emancipation Proclama-
tion.
This
But
one hundred years later, we
must face the tragic fact that the Negro
is still not free. One hundred years later, the life of
the Negro is still sadly crippled by the manacles of
segrega- tion and the chains of
discrimi- nation.
One
faith
to the
we will be abl
of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we
will be able to transform the jangling discords
of our nation into a beautiful symphony of
to hew out of the mountain
This is our
hope. This is the
with which I return
South. With this faith
girls
and walk
together as
sisters and
lowed
spot to
mind America
fierce urgency of
is no time to engage
luxury of cooling off or to
quilizing drug of gradualism.
white
boys
and white
civil
devotees
who are asking
back. There are
march ahead. We cannot
those
the
of
rights,
"When
will you
be satis-
fied?"
We can
never
be
satis-
fied
as
re-
of the
now. This
in the
take the tran-
we shall
turn
we must rise to the majestic heights
Again and again
bound toour freedom. We cannot walk alone.
And as we walk, we must make the pledge that
whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations
our nation until the bright day of justice emerges. But there
something that I must say to my people who stand on the
threshold which leads into the palace of justice. In the pro-
gaining our rightful place we must not be guilty of wrongful
Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst for freedom by drinking
the cup of bitterness and hatred. We must forever conduct
struggle on the high plane of dignityand discipline. We must
allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical vio-
meeting physical force with soul force. The marvelous
militancy which has engulfed the Negro community
not lead us to distrust of all white people, for many
our white brothers, as evidenced by their presence
today, have come to realize that their destiny is tied
with our destiny and their freedom is inextrica-
America until the Negro is granted his citizenship rights.
not pass until there is an invigorating autumn of freedom
equality. Nineteen sixty-three is not an end, but a beginning.
who hope that the Negro needed to blow off steam and will
be content will have a rude awakening if the nation returns
business as usual. There will be neither rest nor tranquility
to underestimate the determination of the Negro.
sweltering summer of the Negro's legitimate discontent
injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. It would be
for the nation to overlook the urgency of the moment
is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of
tion to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the
open the doors of opportunity to all of God's children.
is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of
fierce urgency of now. This is no time to engage in the
cooling off or to take the tranquilizing drug of gradual-
rupt. We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation.
So we have come to cash this check -- a check that will give us upon demand the riches of freedom and the security
of justice. We have also come to this hallowed spot to remind
come back marked "insufficient funds." But we refuse to believe that the bank of justice is bank-
ing this sacred obligation, America has given the Negro people a bad check which has
note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. Instead of honor-
America has defaulted on this promissory

There's no forgetting, there's no winter
that will wipe your name,
shining brother,
from the lips of the people.

Pablo Neruda

passager

Spring 2008 Martin Luther King Issue

From the Editors

Dear Readers,

This special issue of *Passager* is dedicated to the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr., who was killed forty years ago in April, in Memphis.

After the news of King's death became public, riots broke out in cities all over the country, including Baltimore, where Mary and I live. Mary's grandfather had a store on Gay Street, which was spared, while everything around him was destroyed. I was eleven and living in the suburbs, and Mary was living in Holland for a year, so our memories were fuzzy and filled with blanks. Editing this issue has opened our eyes to the complexities of this devastating time.

In a special "Baltimore '68 Riots" section, you will find oral histories by public officials, store-owners, and ordinary people of all ages. Their stories appear in full on the University of Baltimore's "Riots and Rebirth: Baltimore '68" Web site, as part of the University's year-long exploration of the causes and effects of the riots.

We want to thank all of you who sent us your stories and your poems, for helping to bring history to life in a deeply personal way.

And feel free to write to us about this issue. The more voices, the better.

The Editors

Contents

SMALL COMFORT

"God will settle this on judgment day."
Thomas Blanton, Jr., convicted May 2001

How will we settle such a score, heal a scar
still leaking toxins like those train cars
in an old tunnel under Baltimore?
Thirty-eight years, and still the pure

terror of that September day in Birmingham
returns in voices that flutter and land
like acid rain on my skin. Penetrate and
alarm us. Sarah, sister of Addie Mae, hand

us the mirror, the shards of glass you carried,
your lost eye. You become us, become me
holding evidence of what was unleashed
in my name and seeping still under harried

streets we tread. How to read the convicted
bomber's face, his jaw set, depicted
for us—as us—ascribing justice to his white
God? I have seen this face of hate

under bowler hats in Ulster; but my rage
to sentence him—even multiplied by four—
won't incinerate all complicity that courses
still in *we*. Turn the page:

uncertain future, rumblings of protest,
little comfort. —Sarah— *someone ought to be* . . . left
to see with our one clear eye. Still
we possibly shall. (Will we?)

Kathleen O'Toole

TO MY FELLOW POETS • *Tillie Friedenberg*

We gathered in Alabama, thousands of us from many parts of the country: housewives, familiar Hollywood and Broadway figures, students, poets, academics, religious leaders of all denominations, trade unionists, united in our mutual outrage at what we had been seeing on TV—a small group of black people being prodded with electric cattle prods by local police because they were demonstrating, peaceably, their determination to register to vote. They were knocked to the ground by heavy streams of water, and set upon by attack dogs. This violence was perpetrated by local officials intent on depriving them of their constitutional right to make choices at the polls, intent on degrading them, on teaching them to "stay in their place."

We who marched defied them, knowingly risking our lives. Three student volunteers from other states had already been murdered, their bodies rotting in Alabama ditches as we marched. Martin Luther King was in and out of jail. Rosa Parks, an uppity black woman, refused to move to the back of the bus.

My husband and I and our two teenage daughters marched with Dr. King, and we were afraid, but other emotions and realizations overrode our fears. We kept marching to Montgomery: we sang songs of eventual victory, joined hands with strangers to our left and right, empowered by the knowledge of the many who live their lives acting on the belief that the right to live, and to live decently, is an inherent human right.

These marchers were self-respecting persons, whether heeding the Biblical injunction "thou shalt not stand idly by," or acting from a secular, ethical core of belief. We did not blind ourselves to the agony of others who were being oppressed. We poets know how poets and writers living under repressive regimes are jailed, sent to labor camps, and some murdered outright. They are perceived as threats by abusive governments, and understandably so. We are familiar with the way much of the public in Central and South America look to the words of poets. This remains true in some European and African countries as well.

Who looks to poets in our own country? How many of us who write poetry attempt to give voice to the seemingly overwhelming concerns we all have? How many of us try, with our writings, to question, to protest, to express our abhorrence over barbarities that bloodied the century which has just ended and that continue to bloody this new one?

We got to Montgomery, dirty, sweaty, exhausted. The National Guard lined the roads, their rifles in full view. Hundreds of Montgomery residents, black, greeted us with pitchers of water, with hugs, with kisses, and we cried together.

Later, Medgar Evers was shot dead in front of his home. Dr. King was killed in Memphis, where he had come to support the sanitation workers striking for better working conditions. Some of us, after we returned home, joined the

NAACP's picket lines to protest discrimination against black people in public restaurants. We won. Civil rights legislation was passed. My daughters, middle-aged now, learned that one person, joined with other one-persons, can effect change. They still believe that.

Dr. King's dream was becoming reality—just part of his dream so far, of course. It's a long hard trek to the top of his mountain. I'm not up to mountain climbing these days, but I can write.

ON THE ROAD WITH MY SLEEPING BAG AND FANNIE LOU HAMER • *Joan Lester*

Our rag-tag group slept on the pews in our bags, jammed together, giddy, singing freedom songs half the night. *We shall overcome, some day*. My sleeping bag, borrowed from a friend, was damp with sweat while I lay in the hot, muggy church, fervent with hope.

Atlantic City, August 25, 1964. Who knew it would be historic? We were just mad. For years the Democratic Party in Mississippi had methodically excluded Negroes from voting. Whites used every terror tactic, from publishing the names and addresses of those who tried to register to bombing homes. Now they were on a rampage, barring blacks at gunpoint from state precinct meetings, with the governor, Paul Johnson, leader of the state Democratic Party, publicly mocking the NAACP acronym as "Niggers, alligators, apes, coons and possums."

In response, Fannie Lou Hamer and others had formed the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party (MFDP), open to all. Despite harassment, it registered over 50,000 voters in its parallel process, held precinct meetings, conducted county and state conventions, and elected 58 delegates to the National Democratic Convention in Atlantic City, arguing that this delegation represented the legitimate party, the only one run in accordance with the Constitution and the national Party.

I was there when the MFDP rode into town, waiting on the boardwalk with a handful of demonstrators singing *Ain't gonna let no beatings turn us around* . . . marching up to Freedom-land. I'd arrived with a busload from New York City, coming to cheer the MFDP on, ensuring that the credentials committee would honor their legitimacy. *Hold your eyes on the prize, hold on!* we chanted, marching in a circle, certain that exposing inequity would guarantee delegate status for the MFDP.

That first evening after the delegates arrived we went back to the church, chomping on our apples and sandwich crusts, to discover that Ms. Fannie Lou Hamer herself was with us, come to talk to our mostly-white group of supporters. We'd heard of her: a legendary sharecropper from Sunflower County, evicted from the land she and her husband had lived on for 18 years because she insisted on going to town, trying to register to vote. Later, she said, "I guess if I had any sense, I'd have been scared—but what was the point of being scared? The only thing they could do was kill me, and it seemed they'd been trying to do that a little at a time since I could remember."

Ms. Hamer stood above us on the stage that night, placed herself in front of the lectern, and lifted up her skirt. Her legs were large, covered with dark bruises. The inside of her thighs were almost one continuous blotch. "This is what those Mississippi sheriffs did to me," she said, tears rolling in transparent streams down her dark cheeks. "This is how they beat me." She paused, then began to sing, still crying, *This little light of mine, I'm going to let it shine* . . . She clapped to the beat and we all joined in.

I watched, transfixed. Never had I seen evidence of such brutality—or bravery. Her courage was like a tent flapping around her, one that extended to embrace us all. That night, when I lay on the hard pew in my sleeping bag, I vowed that I'd do whatever it took. "No more beatings," I sang softly to myself, as tears trickled into my ears, "No more beatings, anymore."

The next day as we picketed on the boardwalk again, Martin Luther King and Mrs. King swept by: beautiful, wrapped in glory, radiating royal status. Then a friend slipped me a pass to slide inside the Convention for an hour, while Ms. Hamer testified live on TV before the credentials committee. She recounted her beating in the Winona jail, where a state highway patrolman had ordered two Negro trustees to beat her with a blackjack for hours, until she was near death. Choking back tears, she asked, "Is this America, the land of the free and the home of the brave, where we have to sleep with our telephones off the hooks because our lives be threatened daily because we want to live as decent human beings—in America?"

On the convention floor, I heard President Johnson call a hasty press conference midway through Ms. Hamer's speech, cutting her off the air. Later, sitting in a bar sipping beer, we saw the networks run her speech on the evening news anyway, riveting the nation. Still, since Johnson didn't want to alienate the South, with its powerful committee chairs, the MFDP wasn't seated.

Crushed, I returned that night to my sodden sleeping bag, crawled in, and awoke downhearted to a general mood of disappointment. When I returned home stinky and bitter, smelling of three days of sweat, I told my Negro husband that I was fully "in the struggle," as we said then, "by any means necessary." Lying with him in our bed, I swore again: Whatever it took.

But our faith was broken. We'd discovered that playing by the rules was not enough. When Fannie Lou Hamer mourned, "We came with nothing, we'll go home with nothing," I felt the same, unsure where to turn. And I was not alone. Immediately, the civil rights movement—once so clear—fractured, with activists flying every which way. Some, their trust in white allies shattered, created the ideological rationale for a self-reliant Black Power and soon, Black Panthers, Black Muslims. Others, equally disenchanted, embraced a broader self-sufficiency: Ms. Hamer herself created a pig farm for poor whites and blacks, before returning four years later as a full delegate to the Democratic National Convention. Some few, with the background and the heart for it, stepped directly into the corridors of white power, attempting to broker justice from the inside as mayors or members of Congress.

Dispirited, I joined those who began to talk idly of "picking up the gun." For what justice, after all, had our by-the-book protests gotten us? The glamour of an armed revolution acquired full-dress attire in that betrayal on the boardwalk. Our cynicism was confirmed when—after Watts burned for five days in Los Angeles—President Johnson suddenly called for massive spending in the ghettoes. So that's what it took! Chants of "Burn, Baby, Burn" erupted in city after city. Then *Bonnie and Clyde*, the hot

new movie, showed that violence was indeed the thing, if you wanted to help the poor.

Yet romantic talk of insurrection, á la Che Guevara, was one thing, the cold hard reality of a gun another. With no real weapons around, I merely thrilled to the talk, imagining a home-grown revolutionary movement, and cheered on the emergence, cross-country, of California's Black Panthers. When my fantasy of leading an armed revolution failed, though, due to my inability to actually lay hands on a gun—or locate any real-live troops—I fled to my bedroom, nestled into my husband, and began to churn out babies.

Working then as an urban researcher for $3 an hour, running back and forth from the apartment of a neighbor who gave cheap day-care, somehow I kept up my study-group reading of Marx, poring through the *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, trying to understand the process of radical change. But my bitterness grew. I staggered under pressures of work and solo motherhood—for my husband had gone South to foment revolution with his guitar; and I heard he didn't sleep alone. My resentment swelled until finally, desperate, I threw over Marx to help start a new Women's Liberation. Angered at even our civil rights leaders (one of whom declared that the best position for women in the movement was "prone"), a group of us began to meet at the offices of the Southern Christian Educational Fund on lower Broadway to strategize. After several meetings we decided to form small local clusters ("consciousness raising groups"), so when neighborhood women filled my kitchen to recount their grievances, asking, "What can we do?" we started a group. My friend Maria came down from East Harlem to join us, and soon women from all over the city piled into my living room every week to tell their stories.

My rage bloomed while the country burned, fueling my days and nights, in spite of the joy the babies brought. It's fortunate that I didn't have a gun then, because at one point, even pre-*Thelma and Louise*, I thought that shooting the men who didn't respect us was a pretty swift idea. Our group, *New Women*, read a pamphlet that appeared, suggesting a plan: On the very same evening all over the country, when our shiftless men arrived home, they'd open the front door and *Bam!* "One shot for every diaper you never changed." *Bam!* "One toe for each infidelity." *Bam!* "For the broom you've never picked up." Brilliant, I thought, so coordinated, and sure to make an impact. Yet even in an era of burning cities this fantasy too soon faded, joining my earlier one, where I led Black Revolutionary Troops and waved my banner like Joan of Arc.

Instead, once again I borrowed a sleeping bag, this time traveling to Chicago in the cold of November, 1968, for our first national Women's Liberation Conference. We met, 200 women, out in the woods at some god-forsaken YWCA camp with no heat. Though I'd come to represent our neighborhood group, I was unsure whether I had the faith to hope again, to risk heartbreak in another fight for justice. I shivered in my thin sleeping bag the first night, feeling alone, discouraged, and embittered. Missing my babies, I questioned, Why am I here? What

change can we make?

Yet while I lay trembling with cold on that wilderness bunk bed, four years after I'd seen Fannie Lou Hamer on the church stage and cried myself to sleep in the pew, the image of her shining round face, hair pulled back, singing through her tears, came to me. If she could raise her voice to *This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine* after all she'd been through, so, surely, could I. At that moment, with the picture of Ms. Hamer standing on stage, lifting her skirt to show her bruises, I rejoined the caravan of hope. And I snuggled deep into my sleeping bag, which suddenly felt like a warm, portable nest to incubate my dreams of equality.

AUDIBLE • *Linda I. Brown*

Sounds of feet marching, by the thousands; not one verse of *We shall overcome* uttered nor a whisper. Indeed a pin dropped would have been heard that day. Over the horizon they came, holding hands, black over white over yellow; their cultures melted as one and in sync, marching feet, dead silence, eyes straight ahead, they emerged over the Edmund Pettus Bridge.

Eyes on the Prize: Racism was portrayed in this black and white film documentary. I sat and watched this snippet of history decades later.

Eyes shut with not an ounce of understanding at age 13; for I lived in the midst of discrimination and injustice in West Baltimore. Our ancestors endured and were subjected to pressurized hose *waterboard* treatment; held at bay by the authorities with guns on their hips, Billy club in one hand, the other—clenched fist ready to unleash their growling canines with eye-teeth flashing for intimidation, simply because our brown-skinned people demanded their equal rights and the privilege to march on the frontlines, bought and paid for with human hands. I bowed my head and wept.

Eyes open, spring 1968, Baltimore City. My breath nearly touched the nape of the National Guard's neck seated in the back of a Jeep, two-by-two, a total of four, they were locked and loaded. We pursue in chase on our bicycles east on West Saratoga, and the armed guards are oblivious of our presence, disciplined to resist the temptation to confront two clueless 13-year-old Negro girls. We peddled faster in order to catch the breeze from the back of their Jeep and nearly crashed being smarty-pants. That was the height of my experiences during the civil rights movement, Martin's assassination and the heated riots; that and watching folks drag their booty across our back lot: TVs, lamps, furniture, appliances, food—stolen from the trains which crossed Bentalou Elementary's playground. What did I know? I was just an observer, not fully awakened. My middle class parents sheltered their brood from history which touched the threshold of our home and this city greatly.

Eminent Domain erupted in our own backyard. A mass exodus occurred. Thousands of brown-skinned people were violently spewed from their homes legally and displaced throughout our city; perhaps a rebuttal to the 1968 riots in B'more. Said "they needed this stretch of land" where row houses were banked up and down Mulberry and Franklin Streets, nestled between Pulaski Street and what we now know as MLK Blvd. Said it was "the bridge that would stretch over and beyond into the future." Instead it stretched nowhere and ended with one artist's rendition of hope—a huge mural of a barefoot, brown-skinned man planting tree seedlings amidst the stars and blue skies; the American slice of apple pie that they forgot to give us; and so the "*bridge to nowhere*" lies dormant, at the mouth of the MARC and the West Station depot.

We were left with throughways, 40 East

and West and mounds of dirt, and overgrown weeds which peek over the concrete slab walls and ramps as one drives through. But you know there's talk of the Redline coming through, coming soon, through your nearest community, right smack down the middle of *your* neighborhood.

Sometimes, I dread my daily morning drives to deliver my boys to pre-school in the heart of the city. On any given turn, the stretch of blocks is occupied by vacant, boarded homes. These empty residences outdate those who have settled here, after the old timers have retired to "*greener pastures*" or died with the mercy of their homes left to their children who quickly pulled up rooted stakes and fled to safety outside city limits; and yet we fail to see the handwriting on the wall; that the brown-skinned people are not wanted within the city boundaries. The multiple vacant homes hang like dead fruit, ripe until plucked from dilapidated blocks, for dirt cheap. Reminds me of her lyrics, which race through my head as I drive through.

Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees . . .

For dead is dead and there's no life behind the graffiti boards and windowless frames and rows of bombed out brick structures.

Pastoral scene of the gallant south,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth . . .

Even her block no longer stands; only a bronze figure to commemorate the old days when the Royal Theatre stood in the midst of greatness, on THE infamous Pennsylvania Ave. where the well-to-do paraded their finest wears to hear Billie sing.

Scent of magnolias, sweet and fresh . . .

Yet our ancestors fought and were lynched, beaten, arrested and scarred for such a time as this, a man and his dream. Martin bravely stepped to the plate to push a non-violence movement for all human rights. But what's changed, I keep asking myself. We have fallen asleep while city developers plan our lives, right under our noses—and our demise and extinction.

The 21st century and I realize that "Generation-X" hasn't a clue about Martin Luther King or civil rights for that matter; for our morals and values lie in *slinging 'em low gangst' style* pants with their nasty underwear showing, singing nasty rap where the "N" & "B" words are hip-hop O.K. and politically correct with no respect for who opened the doors to allow them to sing this mess freely in public.

Fact: The spirit of Willie Lynch and his ideology has kept Negroes in bondage, whether real or not. It lives on to enslave not only the brown-skinned people, but our white sistas and brothas who live in fear of his spoken words re-enforced by some slick legalistic mind or two. We are all in a trick bag, and they enjoy watching us run for cover like roaches hiding from the light. Or truth be told—we fear exposure that we are clueless and just don't care about Martin, much less Malcolm or Emmett or four little Birmingham church girls or Jena 6 for that matter.

We dog Bill Cosby for speaking truth, and

we all know that truth on our corns hurts! I say wear the shoe and endure the pain for a while in memory of those who fought, stood side by side and yes, were assassinated for their dreams and our freedom to even demand level playing fields. Hopefully Martin did not die in vain, and those who pioneered the way did not waste one drop of their precious blood.

The spirit of civil rights and Martin's dreams, I am afraid, no longer permeates our village. Our ancestors' spirits barely linger. I believe we have somehow lost our way on the freedom trail; for time and keeping up with the Joneses has pushed us far from the tear-stained path, paved and watered with our ancestors' blood, sweat equity, endurance, and even death. We shy away from the responsibility to pick up the cross and surge ahead in the steed of those who have gone before us. Instead, like ostriches, we stick our heads in sinking sand praying that some lone savior will carry out Martin's dream. But we must remember, Moses like Martin only carried the Israelites so far before Joshua caught hold of the dream, and possessed the promised land. Arise, shine brown-skinned people! *My people perish for lack of knowledge,* so the good book tells us.

I am not the 13-year-old naïve little Negro girl from the '60s. I am a grown woman, seasoned with knowledge; God's *Salt-n-Light* warrior armed with truth and carrying her cross. I am fully awake. So ask me now—if I care!

THE COLORS OF 1940

Along York Road, the snow banks, shoulder high
Left narrow passage for the stream of cars
And for a girl who walked with cautious step
In filthy slush beside the rolling tires.

A car containing two young men went by.
"Out of the way, you black bitch," they yelled.
She bristled but did not dare reply.
It was already dangerous enough.

I walked the shoveled path which ran beside
And heard, and felt compassion for the girl.
I wanted to say "You pay them no mind!"
But I was white . . . and I was only nine.

Dawn Huntley Spitz

FACES AT THE FENCE • *Barbara Ann Adams*

I was born the year Martin Luther King accepted the pastorate at Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Alabama. It was 1954, and he was just a little over a year away from leading the non-violent bus boycott in that city. The collective efforts of the boycotters resulted in the Supreme Court decision that declared it unconstitutional to segregate public buses.

I was just three when he became president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, an organization formed specifically for facilitating the massive civil rights movement then underway. But those events hardly mattered to me at the time. I was busy enjoying my childhood, playing with dolls, and learning the alphabet. My parents and our home comprised the boundaries of my world.

Both my mom and dad were born and raised in a small town in west Texas. They married at 20, and then Dad joined the Air Force. I came along five years later and was their only child. My early, impressionable years were spent growing up on military bases and are mostly a blur now. I can recall the different states in which we lived, the ever-changing pattern of friendships, and a few small incidents outside the family setting, but taking note of events on a larger scale was beyond me yet.

Something I do remember, however, was never being taught prejudice. The concept that another person somehow deserved less because of the color of his or her skin was not part of my early schooling. I'm sure growing up on those military installations also helped shelter me from that particular brand of rhetoric. Things like color never mattered to the kids on the base playground. We were more interested in who might help push the merry-go-round faster or be "it" in a game of tag. Several years would pass before time inevitably presented a more complicated set of questions.

I turned nine in the spring of 1963 while Martin Luther King was busy leading the marches in Birmingham. Through lunch counter sit-ins, boycotts of local businesses, and kneel-ins on church steps, the campaign there proved to be a huge turning point in the battle against segregation in the South. I still wasn't quite aware of the growing movement though; it was summer, and I had other things on my mind.

We were stationed in Minot, North Dakota, at the time, and I was looking forward to a trip to Texas, to the town where my mom and dad grew up. We usually took a long leave around Christmas; it got us out of the frigid North Dakota winter, but Dad decided to split his time that year, spending part of the summer there, also. Many of my cousins lived in and around the small community, and they had promised long afternoons at the city pool. Since swimming was something I rarely got to do in North Dakota, I was doubly excited about our trip.

Once we got to Texas, we spent a couple of days visiting some of the other relatives' homes and then settled into my grandmother's back bedroom for the rest of our stay. Swimming was finally on the agenda for the first time since we had arrived, and I eagerly pranced around on the front porch waiting for my aunt and my cousin

to pick me up. I was wearing a brand new yellow and black swimsuit, and I happily pictured myself as Gidget—without the surfboard, of course.

It was hot that day, and the sounds of laughter and fun reached us before we even pulled into the parking lot. The pool was glorious. Painted blue and filled with cool, glistening water, it was filled with kids splashing and diving from both a high and low board. My cousin and I joined the confusion as soon as we could shuck our flip-flops. She introduced me to several of her friends, and a couple of fun hours passed before I noticed the kids outside the fence.

There were seven of them. They stood with their fingers laced in the chain link, their faces pressed against the wire watching the swimmers. My first thought was that they were waiting for friends, or maybe their moms, to come and bring them the 25 cents it took to get into the pool for the day. I hoped they wouldn't have to wait long; watching was certainly not as good as splashing. A little later, several of them wandered off, but another boy and small girl joined the group. The kids were not wearing swim suits or carrying towels, and I began to worry that they didn't have the money to get in at all. I thought of the quarter my dad had given me to buy popsicles, but which kid would I give it to? Suddenly, I wasn't having much fun anymore.

Climbing out of the pool, I found my aunt with a couple of other women. I asked her to show me where the bathroom was located, and we walked into the damp darkness of the pool house. The floor was slippery, and it smelled faintly musty in the building. The children outside the fence were on my mind, and I told her I hoped they could somehow come in and play, too. Her answer to my childlike wish resonates to this day. I can take the memory out and feel the heavy weight of it still. Hadn't I noticed they were black children? *They can't come swimming here; they're not allowed to*, she said. Puzzled, I wanted to know what being black had to do with swimming. She didn't really have an answer: it's just the way things are, and don't worry about it. Those statements didn't help me much or the kids standing on the outside, either.

I looked with new eyes towards the glistening blue water surrounded by its tall barrier and sadly began to grasp the idea. For some reason I couldn't fathom, that fence was fashioned from material far more sturdy than chain metal.

On August 28th of that summer, Martin Luther King gave a speech at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. Thousands and thousands of people gathered to hear him speak, and this time I knew about the event. I can't say I understood everything he said at the time, but I understood better *why* he was saying it. One passage from his speech especially stood out: "Now is the time to rise from the dark and desolate valley of segregation to the sunlit path of racial justice. Now is the time to lift our nation from the quicksands of racial injustice to the solid rock of brotherhood. Now is the time to make justice a reality for all of God's children."

The word *segregation* had entered my vocabulary that summer, and it wore actual faces in my mind. I was only nine, but I caught the spirit in this man speaking from the television. The idea took hold that he might be someone who could help those kids at the fence, and just maybe he could help me, too, find the joy in swimming once again.

A CITY-WIDE RIOT • *Harry Turner*

A city-wide riot is a fascinating thing if you're observing it from a safe vantage point. My perch was my eighth-floor office in the National Press Building, and down below on this April morning of 1968 the fabric of the city was being ripped apart. I first noticed something amiss when I glanced out the window and saw an unusual number of what I took to be shoppers bustling about the stores below. Then I did a double-take: everyone seemed to be carrying great quantities of goods out of the stores as if the Greatest Sale of All Time were underway, as in a sense it was: No Money Down—No Money Ever.

It was an oddly happy scene at the outset, men and women and even young kids laughing and talking as if they had been introduced to the most fun-filled pastime. There was no violence, only jovial people walking out of the shops carrying armloads of clothing and furnishings. The looters weren't even bothering to shatter the plate-glass windows. Instead, they simply walked en masse into the stores and loaded up under the eyes of the helpless clerks. One man I saw was carrying three floor lamps, another a huge easy chair. Some of the looters, those with foresight, had parked their vehicles at the curb for easy loading.

Watching, I could envision a flood of classified ads appearing in the newspapers in the following days: *WILL TRADE: Six brand new women's dresses size 10 for smaller sizes or nice coat.*

It was as if some omnipotent presence had suddenly repealed one of mankind's oldest strictures, the one that said *Thou shall pay for goods received*. No longer. Everything was suddenly free. Load up before the rules change back again!

The catalyst for all this was Martin Luther King's assassination in Memphis the day before. After a troubled night the nation's poorer black neighborhoods erupted. As the day wore on and the liquor stores were sacked, things turned uglier, especially for the small white- and Asian-owned stores in black neighborhoods, though African-American shop owners didn't escape either despite beseeching "Black Owned!" signs hastily put up in front-windows.

Compared to some cities, though, Washington's eruption was relatively benign, if a riot can ever be called that. There was little of the murderous sniper fire, the bloodshed, the sheer malevolence toward whites that accompanied the looting in other cities. I suspect this was due to African-Americans having long been treated comparatively well in Washington, especially by the federal government which employed great numbers of them. Thus the rioters represented only a small part of the city's black populace, the great majority of whom were hunkered down at home like everyone else.

Even so, the riots went on for several days and they scarred Washington, crippling some neighborhoods for years. Many white shopowners relocated to the suburbs, and entire blocks of boarded-up stores stood empty for over a decade.

The second explosion of evil that plagued summer manifested itself two months later in the kitchen of a Los Angeles hotel when a bullet from another assassin's gun shattered Bobby Kennedy's brain. Once more, sickened Americans watched the too-familiar sequence on television: the prostrate victim surrounded by frantic friends, the somber announcement, the weeping eulogies, the funeral cortege. A summer of darkness, and always in the background, the rising tide of blood in Vietnam. What national nightmare were we trapped in? John Kennedy. Martin Luther King. Now Bobby Kennedy. Who next among our leaders was destined for slaughter?

And yet, as horror piles atop horror, the senses inevitably become deadened. Bloody repetition thins out emotion, dulls the mind. Each honorable man's death must be acknowledged by mourning tears, but stunned Americans were running short of tears. In a column for the *Star*, I tried to capture a sense of the times by citing a poem by Dylan Thomas, one written during World War II called "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, By Fire, of a Child in London." The child of the poem was a real little girl who had been incinerated by German bombs. Thomas's theme suggested that her death was so all-horrifying, so all-shattering that it drained away the human capacity to feel. The last stanza reads:

Deep with the first dead lies London's daughter,
Robed in the long friends,
The grains beyond age, the dark veins of her mother,
Secret by the unmourning water
Of the riding Thames.
After the first death, there is no other.

FOR CORETTA

Soldiers camped in the Georgetown playground
tossing their gear into the empty pool.
I dreamed I was sharing a taxi
with Coretta King and her family.
She was holding a baby and she suddenly
asked me to take the baby, to care for him,
to nurture him and help him grow,
and I thought, No, I can't do that,
I'm not worthy.

But it was like a seed, a seed
her family had planted
in me.

Simki Ghebremichael

APRIL 1968 • *Art Cohen*

THE INJURY

Wham! Bang! For a moment everything went black and then bright white on the left side of his face. What the hell was that? First thought: *Jesus, I've been shot!*

Not 20 seconds earlier, Nate had seen a group of youths about 100 yards away looking at a fire up at Central and Madison. He stopped his car on Central Ave., picked his camera off the seat and, without getting out of the car, aimed the lens and snapped three pictures in rapid succession. Within a second or two, the group had turned and started running toward him. A man who looked a little older than the rest was out in front of the group shouting, "Put that camera away."

But Nate was startled at the idea. "Look, I'm a friend. I live here, I'm a Legal Aid lawyer here in East Baltimore . . ." "PUT THAT CAMERA AWAY!" So he did, but it was too late.

He whirled his car around and started driving at top speed up Monument St. to the Johns Hopkins Hospital emergency room. Blood was streaming out of his left temple. There was a kind of sore numbness which was growing worse fast. A pickup truck was driving in the opposite direction, youngsters riding in the back. They saw Nate rushing the other way holding his head, and they pointed and laughed. Nate parked his car quickly and ran into the emergency room.

What a stupid thing I just did, thought Nate. *Mr. Smartypants had to be on the spot to take photos right at the start of what looked like the civil disturbances, Baltimore style*. It was now almost two days after Martin Luther King had been killed in Memphis, after an unnatural calm throughout the central parts of the city where most blacks lived. "It is April 6—do you know where your children are?" Yeah, at least some of them may be out in the streets, roving around, setting fires, looking for shops to loot. What the hell was he thinking? An hour ago, when it was still quiet, he had gone to a small outdoor memorial service for King in Union Square in West Baltimore, and had taken his camera along. Out of respect for the somber occasion, he decided not to use it. Nate had been one of two white persons there, and when it was over around 3:30, he had headed back east over Mulberry and Orleans, turning north up Central on his way home. And now this.

The emergency room nurses, all white, seemed keyed up. "Code Yellow" was the alert coming over the PA system. People were starting to flow into the ER. He was one of the first. A nurse crowed at a black patient: "What, are you shooting your own now?" Not a welcoming remark upon arrival—but this was 1968, Baltimore, and the staff and administration of the famed Johns Hopkins Hospital were in continuing need of consciousness-raising about race.

Nate was bleeding still, and wanted to determine what had hit him. Was there a bullet somewhere in his frontal lobe? Shit—if so, his life was about to change. A doctor came and took a look, and had doubts about it being a

point of entry for a bullet. The bone over the top of his eye socket could be seen through the cut at the bottom of his forehead. "Look, I'm a lawyer," Nate said, "I need to be sure whether or not it's a bullet." Despite the twisted logic of that statement, a nurse said, "O.K., let's wheel him up to Radiology and see what we can." Whereupon Nate, on his gurney, was taken to the next floor up and given an X-ray. He was told, "You were not shot by a bullet. Don't know what hit you." Nate was wheeled back downstairs for his stitches, told to return in five days to have the stitches removed, and discharged.

Change of plans. He was not going home just yet. Still in shock, Nate felt like getting out of the central part of the city—so he decided to ride out Harford Rd. into the comparative calm of Hamilton, where he parked. As he was getting out of the car, Nate noticed something shiny protruding from under the back of the passenger seat. *Well, I'll be damned,* he almost said it out loud—it was the rusted lower metal part of a golf club. A golf club from the streets of East Baltimore—he smiled at the seeming absurdity of it. One of the kids in the group had tossed it into his open car window as a way of protesting his presence and his camera. Pretty effective. *Pretty lucky too—the blow could have blinded me or even killed me from the impact.* Instead, it had just cut through the skin and bruised his temple directly over the left eye.

The shock was wearing off. Nate had planned a week ago to have his friends in for a party that night at his place on north Broadway. He called Johnnie Booker, one of his closest black friends. Johnnie knew his way around East Baltimore. In fact, he worked just upstairs from the Legal Aid East office (at the intersection of Gay, Aisquith, and Monument) at the Citizens Action Center. Just the day before, Johnnie had come down to warn them about impending troubles in Baltimore in the wake of the killing. Many cities had already "blown" but Baltimore was taking its own sweet time. "Drape your law office in black," advised Johnnie. "And do the same for your home if you live anywhere in or near the inner city."

Nate said, "Look, I've got all the party stuff at my house, Johnnie, but I don't feel comfortable holding the party there tonight." After calling around, they decided to move the party north of North Ave., just outside the "hot zone," to Sondra Mason's house.

Johnnie accompanied Nate back to his house to transport the liquor and food to Sondra's.

THE PARTY

The party got underway around 6:30PM. It was pretty well attended—community anti-poverty workers from several parts of East Baltimore, mostly black, with a couple of whites. Of course, Nate was asked almost right away what had happened to him. He recounted it in a self-mocking sort of way. Johnnie then added, "Nate, with your camera, you may have started a riot yourself over there on Central Ave." Laughter and nods all around. "Thanks a lot, Johnnie," said Nate, weakly.

Nate's temple was painfully sore now. *Liquor will help relieve this,* he thought. Over the course of the evening, he drank half a fifth of bourbon.

About King's death, there was shared shock, anger, and grief. People seemed to need each

other to share these feelings. Nate was part of this and yet, for the first time in the seven months he had been living and working in East Baltimore, he felt like an outsider. He did not find appropriate things to say. That night, among those present, there was a mixed sense of curiosity, anticipation, and fear about what the next few days would bring.

By 11PM, the party was winding down. Nate blacked out into sleep on Sondra's couch, and did not wake until her phone rang—it was 7AM and sun was streaming through the front window into her living room. Good timing, he found out later: throughout that night, a curfew had been in effect, the first of several to come. Governor Agnew had just gotten authority from the State Legislature a few days earlier to invoke emergency powers, and he was using them to place curfews into effect. Had Nate tried to return home that first night, he might have been picked off the streets by the National Guard. For the next five days, the hot zone in the central part of the city would be cordoned off by the Guard and Army troops, and anyone with business there would have to clear checkpoints.

Sondra called to Nate, "The phone call's for you." "Hello," he muttered, half awake and badly hung-over, "who's this?" "It's Jeanie—we were all worried about you because your house is in the hot zone. Are you all right?" Jeanie was a white community worker who lived in Charles Village. "Why don't you come over here now and have some breakfast?"

At Jeanie's, Nate called Legal Aid headquarters, and was told to report to the Central Office for a staff meeting on strategy and instructions. In yesterday's clothes, he drove downtown.

THE COURTS

The next four days had Nate and a score of other Legal Aid lawyers working from morning to late each night in the District courts. Nate spent the first two nights at Central District, where they worked until 3AM. Before it was over, Nate would also go to two districts in white sections of town, and one district in a black section.

Central District was in pandemonium. Hundreds of defendants filled the old courtroom, while many others waited in the adjoining lock-up. That first night produced more law violators than the rest. And why? Because Governor Agnew set the curfew early—7PM—and then proceeded to change it twice on the same day: to 6 and then to 4. In the midst of the civil disturbances, many people sat out on their door stoops so as not to feel isolated in their houses behind closed doors. They either had not heard about any of the curfews or were not clear when or what they were. Thousands of Baltimoreans were arrested, swept up off their own door stoops, and loaded into vans to be transported downtown. They filled the jail and prisons for the next week or two. Fortunately, Baltimore (unlike D.C.) decided to hear all its cases right away, rather than allowing those arrested to languish in jail longer than necessary. Of course, this translated into an incredible amount of work for the lawyers who represented them.

Nate saw the need right away for a simple one-page intake form for questioning those who were arrested. What's your name and address? Where were you arrested? What were the circumstances? What are you charged with? etc. The Legal Aid lawyer staff was soon supple-

mented with other young attorneys from the local private bar, many of whom had never seen the inside of a courtroom. Thus it fell to the Legal Aid attorneys to train their private counterparts how to defend these cases.

In early afternoon, Nate was assigned to the Eastern District over on Edison Highway. This court and police station served the area where he worked, lived, and had recently been injured. From 1 to 6PM, he alone provided most of the legal representation for the cases that were funneled through that court. This was the busiest daytime court in the city, except for the West Baltimore District. Case after case came through, with faces attached to the names which he sometimes recognized—some of his regular Legal Aid clients or their family members, neighborhood workers from the Community Action Agency, his barber from the shop at Broadway and Oliver. Most of the cases were curfew violations, with some allegations of petty looting. He challenged as many police officers as he could. Did they actually see the act, or were they just bringing people in on hearsay? One defendant was being held without any charges. Nate pleaded with presiding Judge Martin to let this defendant go if the police just couldn't come up with any charges. After 1½ hours of Nate's pleading, the judge finally, reluctantly, agreed to let the young man go. Nate yelled at the policemen about their reckless hauling of people off the streets and into court.

By now, the pain in Nate's left temple was again killing him, and this made him fight harder. Some of the defendants and their supporters in the courtroom seemed to notice that he had gotten hurt too, yet here he was in court, lawyering his ass off on their behalf. Nate felt a kind of crazy bond with everyone there on the wrong side of the law. During his seven months in Baltimore at Legal Aid, he had already often felt that same bond, but the injury intensified it. Even though Nate's defenses were only moderately effective, he would not soon forget the searing euphoria of that afternoon. Judge Martin was as reasonable as one could expect a white District Court judge to be under the circumstances. All the defendants brought into this District Court—into most Districts—were black.

At Central District, Nate's own landlord from East Baltimore came through. The guy was a prince. He had been one hell of a good landlord, charging him a modest rent after giving the house's interior a fresh coat of paint. It was Nate's distinct pleasure to defend him. Shit—he shouldn't even have been brought in. He, like so many others, had been swept off the streets by the Fort Bragg Army troops.

The next day, Nate was treated to the antics of Judge Barker, usually a "hanging judge" in criminal cases. To his surprise, Barker seemed almost cowed by the current proceedings. It was as if he had seen a communal reaction, when before he had only tried individual defendants, and he was scared shitless. As it turned out, there was no predictable relationship between the behavior of the municipal bench during regular times and during this period of civil disturbance, riot, rebellion, combat, or whatever one might choose to call it. Judge Barker turned meek as a lamb; Judge Richards became tougher than usual; and Judge Kirk remained, consistently, a bastard. And so on.

After the second afternoon at the courts,

Nate took a trip to the Community Action Agency on Mt. Royal to check in and see what was happening. Someone from CAA agreed to go with him to his house to pick up a change of clothes and to check if the house was all right. It was. That night—another marathon session in the Central District.

When Nate arrived at the Southeastern District Court at 9:30 the next morning, about 70 black men who had been on their way by city bus to the Bethlehem Steel plant at Sparrows Point were cooling their heels in the courtroom. Their bus would have arrived at the Point just before 7AM, but since the curfew was to last until 7:00, the bus was stopped, and they were all herded off the bus and into the Southeastern District police station attached to the court. The young prosecutor, apparently tired of having been "the bad guy" the day before, now insisted on becoming Mr. Nice Guy by taking each of the 70 men one by one, lecturing him about the curfew and the need to obey it, and then letting him go. This little exercise in self-indulgence took over two hours. All the men were thus delayed and arrived unnecessarily late for work.

At 1:30 in the afternoon, the young prosecutor heard that his uncle's ghetto store had been looted and burned out. He became furious. No more would he be satisfied prosecuting these nickel-and-dime curfew cases. He really wanted to stick it to somebody. In late afternoon, that "somebody" materialized. Apparently, a car full of blacks had been spied in a "white" section of town (Highlandtown) and had been stopped because some men's clothing was hanging out of a closed trunk. Nate was called in to interview four men in the lockup. All were quite keyed up. They may have been hopped up on something. In fact, they were so out of it that he found himself unable to elicit much useful information. Nate concluded that he would not be able at that time to prepare a proper defense for their case. They were charged with grand larceny for stealing $250 worth of men's clothes from a Highlandtown clothing store. The prosecutor salivated at this new prospect. "Look," he told Nate, "I want to try this case. This is a real case. I want to try it so much I'll drop the charges down to petty larceny, O.K.?"

Nate pondered this. For stealing over $100 worth of merchandise, these men could be charged with grand larceny and if convicted, could face up to 15 years of their lives in prison. On a petty larceny conviction, for stealing less than $100 worth of merchandise, the maximum sentence behind bars was only 18 months. *Eighteen months*, he thought, *even that's a long time. I need to be able to do an investigation, prepare them a good defense, and operate in a calmer atmosphere than this hysteria right after King's death and this blood-seeking prosecutor. No, I'm going to insist on getting a postponement so this case can be tried later on.*

The young prosecutor blew up. He was beside himself. He wanted to try this case "right now." When the night judge came in, he would demand that the case be tried then and there. Judge Donaldson appeared an hour later for night court. *Oh, oh,* Nate thought. *In ordinary times he can be a tough prosecutor's judge. I hope he is as unpredictable as the rest in these troubled times—it can only work in our favor.*

The two lawyers made their cases to the judge. The prosecutor sought an immediate trial. Nate asked for a postponement. Judge Donaldson granted Nate's request. The young prosecutor wouldn't speak to Nate for the rest of the night. The case got handled two weeks later with the assistance of three lawyers, including Juanita Jackson Mitchell. The young prosecutor was taken off the case. The defendants were released on probation before verdict.

On April 11, now a week after King had been killed, Nate and other attorneys were called to the Central Legal Aid office to work on a special matter. Governor Agnew had called a meeting of the leading representatives of the black communities in Baltimore City and Maryland. Top staff from Legal Aid and the Community Action Agency were working on an amnesty proclamation to be issued by the Governor at that meeting for the thousands of people convicted and jailed only for violating a curfew. A one-page document was prepared. Paul Schlitz, Legal Aid's Executive Director, went off with it to the governor's meeting.

Nate heard on the evening news that Agnew's speech turned out to be a shocker for the black leaders in attendance. Instead of conciliating with them and seeking common ground to heal the wounds of the past six days, Agnew whined about Stokely Carmichael and Rap Brown, and scolded Baltimore's middle-class black leaders for "breaking and running," saying that "you agreed [among yourselves] . . . you would not openly criticize any black spokesman, regardless of the content of his remarks." Four minutes into the 20-minute speech, 80 of the 100 in attendance walked out in protest. It was later revealed that Gilbert Ware, the governor's very reasonable advisor on black affairs, had strongly advised Agnew against making the speech.

Black leaders were furious. Of course, Legal Aid's little amnesty proclamation, no longer likely to be accepted in this newly-charged atmosphere, was quickly consigned to the wastebasket. Two months later, at the Republican National Presidential Convention in Miami, Governor Agnew would show the video recording of this speech as proof to other Southern delegations that he was "southern" enough—an effective first stepping-stone for his ascendancy to the Vice Presidency of the United States.

Item: In less than two weeks, Baltimore courts had "processed" a total of over 4,000 criminal cases, most of them curfew violations. Nate was one of about 40 defense attorneys. They had handled about 100 cases apiece.

AFTERMATH

A week after King's death, Nate's fever pitch of activity wound down quickly. He found himself feeling increasingly isolated and lonely, unable to talk with most other whites or with most blacks. The whites were dealing with their feelings of revulsion, fear, dismay, sadness, shame, and backlash about what had happened in black communities everywhere. The blacks had withdrawn to be with their black brothers and sisters, to work through a confusing mix of grief, pride, fear, and anger—especially anger—about what had happened after Martin's death. For the time being, they did not need to be around any well-meaning whites, who had their own feelings to confront.

During this period, Nate was called to speak to white groups around the city to help them work through their reactions to the past weeks. He shared the platform with lawyer (later Judge) Joseph Howard. He joined with others like Chet Wickwire, Chaplain of Johns Hopkins University, to form "Response," a group of people who would attempt to examine what had happened in Baltimore, and also to act as a counterpoise to the insensitivity shown by Governor Agnew. Courses were set up, and this effort became the Baltimore Free University at Levering Hall on the Hopkins Homewood campus. Nate visited Mercy High School to answer questions about "black people" and "the riots." He went back to Dunbar High School where he had been guest-teaching classes of social studies and history students. He had analyzed the questions given to him by 30 history students on April 5, the day after Martin was killed. However he tried to look at them, they all seemed to boil down to two basic themes: one in the form of a question, the other a plea. "Tell us, Mr. White Man, what do white people really think of us and why do they think it?" And, "While you're at it, please tell us you don't think we're inferior."

Nate spent time with a handful of other white friends who were co-workers. But he was alone most of the time. He was surprised to discover that he had his own racist baggage. Up until then, it had been utterly outside his awareness. One day, as he was sitting alone in the park at Mt. Vernon Place, like a flash out of nowhere, he remembered. When he had been eight or nine years old, living in a Maryland suburb of Washington, D.C., he had been warned by a white neighborhood boy to be careful when he went to the Senators' ballgame at Griffith Stadium. He would be going through a black neighborhood, and black teenage boys, he was told, carried razors in their armpits, which they used for slashing people. Nate had carried this "warning" around for over 20 years, buried deep in one of the recesses of his memory—lost until then. He wondered what effect it might have had on him all these years, and how many other such memories were lurking around in his subconscious.

Nate had prided himself on being a "color-blind" white liberal when he came to Baltimore. He had since learned that there was no such thing as color-blind, and that to aspire to be so represented blindness to and disrespect for the culture and situation of people of color. It had also prevented him from being aware of his own racism.

It took a full eight weeks. By early June, Nate noticed that his black associates, friends, and acquaintances had gradually "come back" to hang out with him, joking and drinking and working and loving, and all these things on a stronger basis than had existed before.

It was as if this moving apart and then moving back together had had a rhythm, a natural history all its own. All of them had come through it—come through it together, come through it separately—come through it.

Martin was dead and Martin lived.

THE ASSASSINATION OF DR. KING

The night Dr. King was shot I was bored,
Leaning on the bar, listening. The way I
Often listened, the way bartenders try
To look as if what you're saying explored
New ground, opened a human life and heart
In ways different from all the vanished lives
Spread on the varnished wood, the husbands, wives,
Lovers, dogs, come together, torn apart.
Then the front door banged open. Three blacks, young,
Nervous, jumpy. I thought, "Stickup?" But no.
"Why are you open?" Why not? I could grow
Used to confrontation the way your tongue
Gets used to crooked teeth. "Dr. King's dead.
Close this bar." I didn't question the news.
After John Kennedy, who wouldn't choose
Any dark story. I doused the lights, said
Goodnight, went home to bed. And then I lay
There a long time awake. Is this the way
Things are now? Down the block an Asian store
Was burned because he wouldn't lock his door.

Laurence Snydal

Tyranny cuts off the singer's head,
but the voice from the bottom of the well
returns to the secret streams of the earth
and rises out of nowhere through the mouths of the people.

Pablo Neruda

These oral histories were selected, edited and excerpted from a collection that is part of the University of Baltimore's "Baltimore '68: Riots and Rebirth" project. The interviews were conducted in Elizabeth Nix's history class by the following University of Baltimore students, as well as by WYPR-FM's senior news reporters Fraser Smith and Sunni Khalid: Christina Baird, Desirée Barnes, Alison B. Carney, Nyasha Chikowore, Shannon Chorba, Jessica Knickman, Kristin Mergenthaler, Jaime Nish, Kevin O'Malley, Maria Paoletti, Bashi Rose, Christina Schuyler, John J. Schwallenberg, Valerie Wiggins.

remembering the

Baltimore Riots, Oral Histories

April, 1968

LILLIE HYMAN, HIGH SCHOOL SENIOR IN EDMONDSON VILLAGE

It was like the world was ending. It was like the world was burning. The images they were showing on TV . . . we were looking at images in other cities. And actually some in Baltimore, too, like in Pennsylvania Ave.

Local news stations, news broadcasts, didn't mention it too much. They mentioned mostly Pennsylvania Ave. because Pennsylvania Ave. was populated by mostly blacks. So they only showed where the blacks were rioting or looting. And we found out later, it was other races, and other places, too.

My family and I had traveled over to D.C. to hear King's speech a couple months before he died. That was so great, and hope was built up that things were going to change, and blacks were going to have so many opportunities, and then when he was killed, it was like all hope was dashed. So it was just a very bad time. You felt a sense of hopelessness and vulnerability, because all of a sudden you're living this average life, and then all of a sudden you see people like Martin Luther King dying like this. And it was just a very bad time.

I graduated in '67–1968, after the riots. And I was very militant. I wasn't part of the Black Panthers, but I agreed with their philosophy, I read their books, and I had this great big afro. I was working at C&P Telephone Company, which is Verizon now, and I was the only one who wore an afro. They didn't like it at all. First they tried to get the other black operators to tell me to straighten my hair. And of course I wasn't having it, you know. And then they got the black supervisor to take me off the [switch] board, bring me into her office, and say, "You need to straighten your hair, you can't wear your hair like that in here!" I said, "Well, show me the rule that says that I can't!" And then she said, "Well, you know, things are changing, and you'll never progress wearing your hair like that." And I said, "Well, I'll just never progress."

I was harassed about it, legally, the way they did it, saying I didn't have enough calls or whatever, so I boosted up my calls; at the end of the shift, you'd have to have a certain number of these little cards you made. I knew I had enough. But I would boost up my calls and then they would say something else, I was a minute late or something. It was always something.

But [I] kept [my afro] picked out, and shaped and everything. And I had to wear my little headset over this, you know? And I had great big hoop earrings. I didn't wear *dashikis*, but we wore these miniskirts. But it wasn't the dress; it was the hair. They saw that as a militant thing, it was scary to them.

[After the riots] we became more militant in our thinking . . . it was like, what do we have to lose? The black community split at that time. This was the time of the Black Panthers . . . but I wasn't that far over, I mean, believing in guns and all that. And plus, I wasn't a Muslim. And that was a thing a lot of people don't understand; most of the—well, not most—but a

lot of people who were in the Panther Party, or the Black Muslim Party, they weren't Christians, or most of them weren't. The young radicals, they became more radical, because they said, "See? We told you!"

It hit home. We didn't know this man personally, but it was like a family member, it was like that. There were some, I mean, there are, there were, good white people—they felt it, too, the same thing. And I think black and white, I can't speak for the white, but I think, the same way, I think white people became more convinced, you know, one way or the other, about these things.

You've got to remember, right after that, well, during that period, actually, was the Vietnam War. I lost so many friends in Vietnam—who died right then, it was just like the war now. They were young kids, just straight out of high school, 19 or 20, fighting in a war, dying, killing. And a lot of my friends who didn't die came back addicted to drugs, you know, a lot of them.

Oh, man, that's another thing, too, that happened. I don't know because of what happened with MLK and the riots, but that people, some people, I guess, just dropped out. You know? They just dropped out.

I think people made a stand more. Before, a lot of people were on the fence, it was this group of militants, this group of nonviolent, and you know, you would kind of straddle the fence. But I think people made more definite—after the riots, and after Martin Luther King—they made more definite commitments to . . . I think more people joined the NAACP, and more people joined the Black Panther Party, or the Muslim Party, Black Muslim. So, people made more decisions, I think, more definite decisions about things after that.

THOMAS DONELLAN, ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIEST

During the '50s, the total racial complex of our city neighborhoods changed. Black people, having made some money during the war, began to move into white neighborhoods. And the white people, in great numbers, moved either north or south or west because Baltimoreans move in a straight line. And so, large areas of Baltimore City went from all white to all black in two to three years.

Baltimore St. became the great divide: the north side of Baltimore St. was 100 percent black, on the south side, it was almost totally white. The white people had lived there for 100 years. They were the descendants of the Irish and other nationalities that built the railroad at the B&O.

Wherever we could, [we'd] find something to encourage the people, especially if we could find something for [blacks and whites] to work on together. So, between '65 and '68 things were going in a positive way. Now, that doesn't mean there were great successes. There were minor steps. But, at least, something was happening.

There was goodwill in the neighborhood. The Hollins St. area had the Hollins Market, [which] was totally integrated because it was the only place in the community you could buy fresh foods.

I was 38 and pastor of the Church of Saint Peter the Apostle, at Hollins and Poppleton St., when the riots broke out.

We didn't expect a riot. We were positive; we thought we could change the city. It was a very, very positive energy coming from all, and not just the churches. [It was] the beginnings of the community action agency of [President] Johnson's war on poverty. Young people volunteered for VISTA, which is Volunteers In Service To America, which was a fairly substantial program rooted in the beginnings of the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

But there began to be an uneasiness. It's hard to put it into words. We didn't even want to face it, but there was an uneasiness there. And when Martin Luther King was assassinated, we just did not know what was going to happen.

I remember getting a call very early Saturday morning that there was a major confrontation—we didn't really want to call it a riot because we didn't know what a riot was. We had never seen a riot. There was not one person who expected it to spread to West Baltimore. We thought we had really done the job.

What we were asked to do was to spend Saturday and Sunday and Monday on the street, all of us, not just priests or ministers but any VISTA worker or health workers or nurses, just walk the streets and visit with people and try to tell people we're different. And there were literally dozens, if not hundreds of people walking the street in the white community and black people in the black community. I don't know if you can understand what it's like to live one half a block from a divide between thousands of black people and thousands of white people. It was a very different experience.

But we were building bridges and that was helpful. On the Monday before Easter, I was out walking the neighborhood, I was about three blocks from the church talking to the neighbors because the schools had been closed and the businesses had been closed. Tragic decision. Had the schools and businesses been open, I don't think we would have had the riot.

I was about three blocks from the church about 2PM and I heard the terrible roar of police sirens in great numbers. I thought, *Oh my goodness*. So, I rushed back to the church. It was one of the low points of my life because on the corner of Baltimore St. and Poppleton St. on both sides everything was being set on fire. The stores were being looted. There were literally hundreds of people burning down Baltimore St. The police were totally helpless. And this was a huge number of people. We never dreamed. And just looking at it was looking at something that was horrible because here were people who were acting not like people. You know, they were literally out of their minds with hate, with sheer rage. Rage is a better word [here] than hate.

I took a position about a half a block from Baltimore St. But suddenly behind me were hundreds of white people armed, because they were not going to [let them] burn our church. [They were armed with] guns. Knives. Some of them were policemen, security guards. But living in the city [and] having a gun was not unusual. The great fear was [that] the black mob [might] move on our white church. I shuddered when I thought about what could have happened. There would have been incredible bloodshed. I stood in the middle of the street, and the rioting was going on [all around me]. All we could do was watch. We had one whole block on one side. We had a major school on the other side, which was not a school any longer but a community building. At no point did the group turn to come anywhere near our facilities.

On the corner of Baltimore and Poppleton, there was a small shoe store owned by a very, very good man named Klein. He had been there 30 or 40 years. We used to buy shoes from him for the kids in the neighborhood. If they showed up at school without shoes, we would send them to him and the churches would pay for it. He came rushing up, he had heard of the riot, he saw his store in flames and people carrying his shoes out. There was a whole line of substantial people who were trying to stop any movement, you know, [trying to stop] the white people from getting involved. And he came running up and broke loose, ran across the street into his store. So, three of us ran after him into his burning store, grabbed him and dragged him out, and all around us were flames and people taking his shoes.

All of the buildings were being burned. Every store was being looted. In fact, from Baltimore and Poppleton, down to what is now Martin Luther King Blvd., all of those stores, whole blocks were burned. Where the University of Maryland is now building, those buildings, that space, was all destroyed in the riots. And they weren't all businesses. If you know Baltimore City, business is usually on the first floor and people lived in apartments above them. So, there were people living there, too.

Tuesday, the governor declared martial law, which meant anyone on the street after four o'clock was subject to being shot. The National Guard was on [duty], camped at Carroll Park. But they were not trained to shoot to kill; they did not know how to handle the hatred and violence that had erupted. On Wednesday, the governor asked the President to send in the federal troops. And there was a contingent of the 161st or 162nd Airborne Division out of Fort Bragg that had just come back from Vietnam and had been granted Easter leave to go see their families. The President cancelled their Easter leave and ordered them into Baltimore. It's not hard to imagine the mood that they were in, just having come back from Vietnam and having their leave cancelled. So, the riot really ended with their arrival because they were trained to shoot to kill. Rioters would walk up to and just make fun of the National Guard, but they did not make fun of the 161st Airborne. They just clamped absolute martial law on everything. Nobody could move, day or night, without the permission of the commander.

Meanwhile, there was no food. The stores were closed. [And yet] a very positive thing was that churches all around the city and Lions Clubs [and others] were collecting canned goods and clothes.

I was determined we were going to have the Easter Vigil at 11 o'clock at night. I went to see the commander of the Guard, and I was, along with some of the other ministers in our Southwest organization, a liaison between a community and the military and City Hall. I said to him, "Look, I've got to have this service at 11 o'clock tonight." Well, things had eased up a bit. He said, "We have a lot of Catholic soldiers who want to go to Mass for Easter." Other churches were going to be allowed to have Easter Sunday services. I said, "Well, we'll have Easter Sunday, but we have to have this Saturday night service."

We spread the word to all of the areas around, and they sent jeeps with armed men to escort the walking crowd to church. And we had the biggest crowd, several hundred people. And if you know St. Peter's Church, it has big parapets. On the high granite, there were armed soldiers. And of course, some of the worshipers were soldiers. Some had to go in and out, but we were well protected. And although I've been a priest 51 years now, that was probably the single most positive religious service that I ever celebrated because we had gone from death to resurrection, which was incredible, an incredible thing.

After the riots were over, things were not normal, by any means. The black community, the ministers, would not speak to us, because they said if they did, they would be in trouble with their communities. They would be "Uncle Toms." Where there had been cooperation, there was now distrust and animosity. We did not know what the future held. But we did know that animosity had returned. The total experience of seeing the riots start and seeing all of the years of hard work to build bridges literally burned up in a moment.

JOHN J. DARLINGTON JR., NATIONAL GUARD

My wife and I were sitting down to dinner and I got a phone call from our company first sergeant and he said for me to get hold of all the men from my platoon and have them report in their military uniforms to the Fifth Regiment Armory as soon as they can get there. So, we didn't know what was going on. You turn the radio on, there was nothing going on. Come to find out later that that was done as a result of an order from the mayor that he wanted to keep this out of the public venue.

As I was going down the Jones Falls Expressway, getting closer to the city, I could see in the distance flames and smoke and something's happened. We all got down to the Fifth Regiment Armory and we were told that a riot had broke out in certain sections of Baltimore City and that we were called by the governor to help quell it.

I never thought that there was a tension in the city that I could perceive that would lead to this. Usually there are signs. Crime certainly was not as rampant as it is now. We all reported to the Fifth Regiment Armory—800 people in military uniform show up at the same time not knowing what's going on; rumors are rampant.

My platoon was a reconnaissance platoon; we were mobile; we had a means of getting around in vehicles. So our job was to patrol the various riot sites. There had already been a curfew enforced by the police. We were advised to enforce that rigidly no matter who it was, white, black, doesn't matter, if you're on the street after four o'clock and you don't have a written pass, we're going to arrest you and that was the way it was enforced.

But that night, that first Saturday, we patrolled Gay St., North Ave., all through the little neighborhoods off of York Rd., all through that entire riot area and everything was very quiet. The riots in that area kind of subsided, I guess, because of the curfew and so we didn't see a lot of people, but we saw a lot of stores that were destroyed. The weirdest thing in the whole thing reminded me of a science fiction movie, where you see a city street and there's nobody on it. You see the wind blowing papers and it was just like that. And the only thing you could hear, because there weren't any cars, the buses had stopped, nobody physically was on the street, so the only thing you could hear was these various little stores had alarm systems, and the alarm gongs were going off, so you heard almost a melody of alarms throughout this entire neighborhood and it was really weird, really eerie.

People were afraid of us. Our basic weapon was an M-1, and it carries an 8-round clip, and we had the clip hooked right here on our coat, on our jacket so you could see it. We didn't have any bullets chambered in the weapon, the weapon itself was unloaded but we could have easily put it in there very quickly if we were in any danger. If we ran into a problem that required force of arms, we'd call the police. Those were our instructions, call the police. In fact there

was only one round fired in the riots by a National Guardsman, and that was by accident. No National Guardsmen killed any rioter.

The first thing we did, we took all our bayonets, and we took steel wool and we took all the bluing off the bayonet. The bluing is to keep the bayonet from rusting. So when in the sunlight, it shined and that blade, which is that big [gestures], in the sunlight it looked like it was *that* big [gestures] and that scared a lot of people. We used various riot formations in which the weapon was brought down to waist level, and we just marched that way. And it was just like a phalanx of bayonets and that moved everybody out, they just all moved back. We didn't have to shoot, we didn't have to beat up anybody, and that's the way we controlled it.

The people in the area, black and white, made no difference, a lot of those small store owners were afraid to close because they thought if they'd come back the next day their store would be burned out. A lot of restaurants too, and so these restaurants would stay open all night and bring us hot sandwiches and coffee, free. There was a real camaraderie between the civilians and the Guard and again it was across racial lines.

Some of the reports out of the other cities were very bad. The newspapers kept everything inflamed, and I really blamed the severity of the riots on two things. The newspapers, the *Baltimore Sun* and the *News American*, and the mayor, because they kept this issue inflamed and it was a feeling that maybe the riots would break out again. They never did, thank goodness, they kept trying to divide people and I have no sympathy for people like that.

After the riots, just about every time we had a holiday, we got called up and put in the armory for the day as a protection against the riots. And that really rubbed thin after awhile. First of all, what did it say? What did it say to the community at large? It said they can't be trusted and they have to have the Army and the National Guard in the armory ready to break up a riot. To me that promotes that kind of feeling. I spent three Easters in the Fifth Regiment Armory, because we were called up for riot duty, the four anniversaries of Martin Luther King's assassination, riot duty. I don't believe there was any other real threat of a riot since Martin Luther King's death. All that did to me was promote this atmosphere of tension.

I think there are bad people out there and that's how I always looked at them when I was in the Guard, they were law breakers. I think the communities that we were exposed to in our duties became much closer as a result of the riots. Local business, they came to our aid, there was a mutual satisfaction between the Guards and the local merchants, we talked to a lot of black men, a lot of black women when we were manning some of these checkpoints and they were just as distraught about this thing as anybody. I mean they cried, because what little they had put together in their lives, and their lives were getting better, was then suddenly destroyed by these people. And you know, we were told very much to keep our personal opinions out of anything, so when we talked to these people we didn't egg them on to say anything. We let them vent and they vented.

RUTH STEWART, SCHOOL TEACHER IN WEST BALTIMORE

I lived on the corner and there was a pool room and a restaurant and a square. We used to take our kids in that square and play, but then we couldn't go in the square because the drug dealers dealt from the square. They were there before '68, but they became more visible in '68. They didn't care about who saw them, you know, they did their thing, they sold their drugs or whatever. So, we didn't have access to the square unless we went early in the morning.

We had a nice backyard. So we kept our children in the backyard. My grandmother was always in the backyard doing her garden thing, and hanging up clothes. So we would always be either at grand's or at my sister's, because we all lived in that area.

And when the riots came . . . MAN! It [was] fires, it was people just moving, running with food and appliances and clothes. Because we had a pawn shop, we had liquor stores, we had bars. And people took chains, I could see them, this man took chains and put them on the back bumper of his car. This store on Monroe and Edmondson had bars over the window. And he hooked the chains to the bars and he ripped the bars off and it was free range. And everybody was up in that store, ME, everybody was up in that store.

And, my baby, I never bought baby food from that time to up until she was off baby food. I didn't buy Carnation Milk anymore until my child was drinking quart milk because during the looting I knew they were things that I needed. A lot of people went in for cigarettes, and stuff like that, but I had two children, [and] I didn't know what was going to go on after this. My husband was in the service, so I said I got to look out for my children. So I went in and I had milk crates full of Carnation Milk. And I would run and dump that in the car, and run back and fill it back up again with some more stuff.

But, it was a scary time because you didn't know whether or not the world was coming to an end because everywhere you looked there was smoke and fires and people running and screaming. And furniture stores on Edmondson Ave. were hit, and you could see people coming out on the streets with TVs and stuff. I saw my cousins, and they had a sofa and one was on one end and one was on the other.

And the next thing you know, here are all of these soldiers setting up camp right in the square. We had a curfew, so we were out there early, and when it was curfew time we were in the window and watching them get people walking with furniture and appliances and stuff that they had looted from these stores.

That was a scary time because you didn't know whether you would live or die.

And people that didn't know what was going on saw people coming out of these stores, stopped their cars and next thing you know they were up in the stores too. I was at home when it first started, and we didn't know that the looting

was going on until my brother came and said, "Man, these stores are wide open, you better go." "What do you mean the stores are wide open?" He said, "People are just stealing stuff and just walking down the street and all kinds of stuff." So we just get in the car . . .

And we had so many hams. We went in one store and they had hams galore. And I remember my brother had the machine that you just slice lunch meat up and you could see him dragging it down the street. But we had big hams: Silver Label hams—Esskay Silver Label hams.

I was getting the things that we needed. Vitamins in the [corner] drugstore where I lived. When they pulled the bars off, I just grabbed Poly-vi-sol because that is what my children and my sister's children took. So, I got plenty of vitamins. I went in for what was going to help me and my family. I got liquor, and I was selling liquor because I had so much of it that I wasn't drinking.

We were about survival, and survival meant you had to go and take what you were going to take. Because no one was opening the stores to let you buy anything, so we had to rip them open. And that's what we did.

A lot of my relatives were arrested walking out of stores with stuff. We was coming from a famous store on Gilmore St., and we were coming out of the basement. It was a trap door in the store, and that's where all of the meats and stuff was. And we were coming up out of the basement with these hams. Now, here are these soldiers coming into the store. They had guns blazing, and they macing people, and my niece just happened to come right by when they sprayed the mace, and she went down. And I had to drop my ham and pick her up . . . The whole air was just mace. And you had to go down low and try to crawl out.

People were trampled. When all that looting was going on people was in them stores, and people were all over the top of people. People were trampled. Trampled. Hear me? It was like letting a bunch of wild horses loose. And if you fell, you better hurry up and try to get up. I was in the middle of it. I was more afraid that if I didn't do anything, I was going to be lost, you know, so I had to stick with them blacks. You know, this is our revenge, this is our war.

Then the soldiers came through the blocks with the bullhorns, "Clear the streets! Get off the streets. Get in your homes, get out of the windows." But we were defiant. No we ain't staying here. All that could happen to us would be that we would die. If we did stay in the house with no food or anything, we were going to die anyway, so we'll take our chances out there.

The churches were telling people to quiet down and stay in your homes and don't be involved in this kind of thing and that Martin wouldn't want this, but . . . people were thinking about survival. The pastors . . . they were trying to bring us together. We thought we gained more doing it our way than doing it peacefully. We had seen what our parents and grandparents had gone through, my grandmother especially. She was brought up through slavery, so she really lived in fear and she tried to instill that fear in us.

And now, with this younger crowd, their tolerance is really short, even my own children. My oldest child is 41, my son. He wouldn't have made it back when I was coming up, because, like me, he's mouthy. Right now my son is in prison . . . Well, both of my sons are incarcerated, one in Cumberland and one is in Ocean City, and they don't take no stuff. They wouldn't take half of what I went through. They have their own beliefs now, of their people that were slaves, or former slaves; they have heard and read about our family history. The younger people now, their mind set is: "No way! We're not going back to that 'Martin dying was an inspiration.'" He was an inspiration for a lot of us that sat back and took what was dealt out. And [his death] made fighters out of those of us that weren't fighters.

THOMAS D'ALESANDRO III, MAYOR OF BALTIMORE IN 1968

I can give you a little example of how the racial relationship was: You could go out to the Colts game and see Lenny Moore break through one of those linemen and go 64 yards for a touchdown. And everybody in that overwhelmingly white Memorial Stadium crowd was up cheering, cheering, cheering. Then, after the game when the team went out to have dinner, Lenny Moore wasn't invited; he couldn't get into the white restaurants. You could cheer his run but you couldn't allow him to eat.

We had a solid black community; even in those days, we had a solid black community. It was controlled by the Ministerial Alliance, by the churches. Their churches were packed—1200, 2200, whatever their church could hold, they were packed. And I was there every Sunday to see them packed and jammed.

Former Mayor [Theodore Roosevelt] McKeldin was a champion of civil rights in a time when there were very few champions in the white community for civil rights, but he was out there. That ingratiated him with the black community. I, as mayor, inherited a lot of goodwill, and then I established my own record with the black community to enable us to try to avoid this riot. My hope, at that time, was that if we could have made it to Sunday morning when the Ministerial Alliance and the black churches would be opened for services, then we would have made it. We lasted through Thursday and Friday night and at five-thirty on Saturday night is when the riots started on Gay St.

I had a meeting about ten o'clock Saturday morning with Governor Agnew. Things were relatively calm; all the reports coming back were relatively good. But it was at that time that Governor Agnew said that if anything happened that he was at my beck and call as far as the National Guard was concerned, even calling for federal troops—I couldn't call for federal troops; it could only be the governor. He was extremely cooperative. We had a lot of community action people out in the streets as well. Everything was in pretty good shape. But I did mention to the governor that I thought it looked too good. I just had that antsy feeling about it.

I left the City Hall about three o'clock, I guess. I got a call at home about five-thirty that a brick had been thrown through one of the stores along Gay St. One brick led to another, and that was the beginning of the riots.

I rushed back down to the City Hall. Then I went right away immediately to the war room of the police department. We had the police out there; we had the fire department out there; we had the National Guard out there. And I kept looking out and I saw smoke breaking through in all areas of East Baltimore. I was troubled, but they told me things were under control, that the police were out in the streets. Then there was Major Armstrong, one of the greatest policemen in the history of the city. Well, when he came into the room, and I saw the look on his face, I didn't need any more reports. I knew we were in serious trouble.

Saturday night late, 10, 11 o'clock, things began to spread into West Baltimore. That's when I called Governor Agnew and asked for federal troops.

Federal troops came into Druid Hill Park about 6 o'clock Sunday night, and for all intents and purposes, by 9 o'clock Sunday night, the riot was over. There were 82nd Airborne Infantry troops. They came down Park Heights Ave. with fixed bayonets. They never fired a shot; I think a couple of rifle butts were used. It was all over by 9 o'clock.

You know, the rioting by itself—the burning, everything that took place there—was all new to us. So everybody in their different sphere of activity—the police, the mayor, the judicial system, the States Attorney's Office, the United States Attorney—everybody had to improvise.

Nevertheless, [less than 48 hours later] Tuesday at 1:00, I threw the first ball out to open the baseball season [at Memorial Stadium].

The reports that I was getting was that there was a lot of looting taking place, they were putting them into big trucks, and they were dropping them off at some points in Baltimore City, and these trucks had Washington, D.C. license plates on them. So, I was of the opinion that when President Johnson closed down Washington by bringing 10,000 troops into Washington, I think an element—I call it a criminal element—came out of Washington and breached our work. But I couldn't prove it. I said it, I said it on the radio and television, and they told me not to say it anymore because I couldn't prove it, which I couldn't prove. But these were the reports that I was getting.

There was tremendous hostility and animosity towards me and towards the city administration by most of the people whose properties were burned out. I was sued hundreds of times. They were thrown out of court. But that's natural, you know; they lost their livelihoods. That was one of the areas where we tried to get them back on their feet as quickly as possible, but you can imagine those people who had their livelihood taken out from under them.

I got advance notice of [Governor Agnew's] statement from one of the TV stations. And I read it before it became public and I called him. I said, "Governor, can you either not make the statement or redo the statement or not call for a declaration of war with the black community. Smoke is still present in the city; let's just have a cooling off period." But he said, "Tommy, I'll tell you, Tommy, that's how I feel, and I am going to say it and I'm going to stick by my statement."

There is no such thing as perfection when you're dealing with urban government. But I think on the whole, [things are] better today than they were forty years ago. Blacks are everywhere in government. [Look at] the Board of Estimates: the mayor is black; the President of the City Council is black; the Comptroller is black; the Director of Public Works is black. So the whole Board of Estimates is black. That personifies what's going on throughout the community, in the professions, in every walk of life.

This is a great city that had a very serious interruption [from the] riots. But we have grown far beyond anybody's imagination. There are still pockets of poverty, and there's some

areas of real concern, but on the whole this city is on the march and this city will grow, will grow. This city is going to boom like nobody could expect. So we're past all our troubles in that sense, and we've got to look to the future with a tremendous amount of optimism.

JUANITA CRIDER, CHILD IN EAST BALTIMORE

In April of '68, I was seven years old and in the second grade.

I remember coming home from school, my grandmother was crying. Even before Dr. King's death, we had a mantelpiece, and there was a picture of Dr. King, JFK and Jesus Christ and some other family members on the mantelpiece, they were just like the heroes of my grandmother. I've seen similar things in other black people's homes.

I remember the curfew, my father got arrested for breaking the curfew—that's why that really stands out in my mind. Daddy's not coming home, he got arrested for being out past the curfew. One teacher threatened us that if we didn't behave she was going to keep us after school past the curfew. We were scared. I wasn't the only one who had somebody in their family who had gotten arrested for breaking curfew. My father was in jail for 48 hours. [He] missed work, that was a big issue in the family. He didn't get fired or anything, but that was just a big discussion.

Levinson and Klein was a furniture appliance store and they had a warehouse right on the 1200 block of Linwood and people were looting in there. I remember seeing somebody in uniform, the police or National Guard, standing on top of the roof, to keep the looters at bay. I had seen policemen walking a beat but to see them standing on top of a building, you know, it was really scary.

Of course you know a seven-year-old come on asking a lot of questions, *why are they up there, did we do something wrong?* You know they're up there to protect the stuff in the store. I think everybody was anxious, even the little kids. We may have not understood, but our parents were anxious.

The adults were very sad, very in a quandary. They tried their best to answer our questions about why people fight, why they taking stuff, why they burning things. And the teachers would say, people just don't know what to do. My mother would just say, I don't know, you know, go play.

One thing that came up, that comes up still, is why would they burn and loot in their own neighborhoods, with [my mother's] generation and my grandmother's generation. Why, why would they destroy? We didn't have much, why would they destroy things in our own community. That's a very sensitive area for a lot of people.

MELVIN DOUGLAS WILLIAMS, ALSO KNOWN AS "LITTLE MELVIN"

The day Dr. King was assassinated I was in the poolroom where I spent most of my life . . . The poolroom was on Pennsylvania Ave. and Smithson St.

I remember that everybody was running around seeming to be disturbed; because someone that they had not really known personally, was so personally associated with them. And what he stood for and how now, all of a sudden, this person's existence is so much more profound than it was in the past.

Someone came into the poolroom and just shouted out, "Man, they just killed Dr. Martin Luther King." Everybody looked wide-eyed and mystified at each other, "Aw, he don't know what he's talking about." This guy is the first to blab all the time. Everybody started going in different directions to see if it was the truth. So we turned the radio on then we turned the TV on and in minutes we found out that he had been killed.

It seems that whenever one of us reach a form or a point of prominence, something bad always seems to happen to him. It happened to Martin, it happened to Malcolm. It seems that each time one of us gets so smart that he wants to wake the world, they want him dead. Now it doesn't matter if this one individual becomes brilliant himself. His individual brilliance doesn't seem to really bother anybody. But when he starts to try to change everybody around him to think like him . . . .

There gradually became a feeling of I need to vent. I need to make someone understand just how bad I feel by making some kind of statement or making them feel bad. There were several white people that owned stores up and down Pennsylvania Ave. and it seemed a day that just being white was the wrong complexion.

I remember clearly the day that General George Gelston, in charge of the National Guard of the Fifth Regiment Armory, Major Box Harris, a black police officer at that time, and Senator Clarence Mitchell III, came to my house and said, "Melvin we want you to come with us and hopefully stop the people from rioting." And I said, "Why me?" They said, "Because it appears that you have the audience captivity syndrome going for you right now that they seem to listen to you when you say something." And so I says, "Let's go! Let's see if that, if that holds true and if it does I'm delighted. If it doesn't, I hope you don't hold it against me." And so, I think Major Harris said, "Take this bullhorn and this bulletproof vest and we off." And so I says, "Well, I can take the bullhorn but the bulletproof vest I couldn't wear that because it's the same neighborhoods that I'm in all day everyday and it seems like I'd be punking out if I took a bulletproof vest today and I didn't wear it any other time. So let's proceed with that in mind."

And after we rode to several of these places, I got out of the car and stood on a box on a car hood or roof and said, "You have taken all there is to take out of this black community.

You've taken the heart out of your own area. But more importantly, I've been told by this general that in the event that you cross Howard and Franklin, those two streets that divide the things that belong to the powers that be and white America, they're going to kill you wholesale. They're going to kill you all in a manner that would let it be known that this is something that we will not tolerate. And they tolerated it as long as we were destroying black things. But they made it clear that you can take Pipe Rack and Cookie's and Rodman's and all those places. You can destroy as much of it as you choose. But again, if you cross Franklin and Howard we going to open fire and we're going to kill you all wholesale."

And I finally said to them, "You need to go home; you need to go quick. There's going to be a curfew. It gives credence to those of you and I that they really, they being the establishment, really want to beat, they want to beat you down. Do not, I repeat, do not give them an opportunity to do that, under this probable cause theory after the sun goes down." So everybody left and went home.

PATS FAMILY, OWNED AND LIVED ABOVE DOWNES BROTHERS PHARMACY LOOTED DURING THE RIOTS

Sharon Pats Singer: We owned Downes Pharmacy. We lived there for 18 years. We lived upstairs and my brother was born in 1950. I was born in '51. That's all we knew was North Ave. That was our home.

The store was on the first level. It had in it at that time a fountain. The fountain had ice cream and sodas and things like that, really fun kind of things. And patent goods and medicine, the pharmacy was in the back. That was the place where they could buy their prescription drugs and get their toiletries. And then it was a place also, even though there was a bank on the corner, Union Trust, they could get their checks cashed because they did not have accounts at the bank. My mother did the taxes for people during tax season, right in the middle of the store. She would sit there at the little desk and she would fill out, everybody, they'd be waiting in line just to get their income taxes done and that was a separate little business there, part of the business. When the people in the neighborhood got welfare checks, the line would be out the door to cash the checks.

Ida Pats: The banks didn't accept them and they didn't accept the banks.

Sharon Pats Singer: They had a trust in my parents, in fact so much so that my parents had a little file box, and in the file box were just file cards with people's names on them, and if they didn't have enough money to buy their toiletries or to get whatever they needed, my parents would write their names down and they would get it on account. No interest or anything like that, it was just a very trusting kind of system. That's the way it was, it was just a neighborhood business, and when we grew up, all I knew growing up was that, that was my home . . . We would come home from school and go to work in the store.

It was different from your typical childhood. But I enjoyed it because the customers were friendly and fun, and we had people to talk to and things to see and do. I never thought about race as an issue at all. So when the riots came, I don't really think that we thought that anything bad was going to happen. It was a trusting kind of thing where this was our neighborhood, and it just wouldn't happen, they just wouldn't do this, and it never occurred to us.

I remember before the riots, it was very tense after Martin Luther King was killed, one of the women who was working at Lou's bar up the street, a black woman named Brooke, and she came into the store, and she said to my father, "You know, you'd better get out." And he wasn't really listening to that, because he never thought anything was going to happen. I was standing there, and I was, you know, I just wasn't believing what I was hearing, and I went to sleep like any other night.

And sure enough, the next day . . . that Sunday morning, we went shopping, and I was going to pick up my sister Betty. And I

came down 83. We turn off on the exit which is North Ave., make a right to go towards the house, you could see the neighborhood, it's a couple blocks up, near Mt. Royal. And the whole block was in smoke and flames. That was the point that we freaked out. Now, we didn't know what was going on. My father was sleeping because it was Sunday morning, and we were like, "Oh my God! You know, is he O.K.?" At that point I am thinking, I've got to get home. The streets were blocked off. There were masses of people in the streets. All I saw were masses of black people in the street. That's all I saw. And flames. And they wouldn't let us get past.

So I knew the back roads, and went around and came down to the Esso station, which was there across the street. There was my father, waiting for us, in the Esso station. I will never forget that. He got in the car, and we left. We picked up the Eisenbergs. They had no car and no way to get anywhere. They had the jewelry repair shop. So they were all waiting. They piled in the car, and we left.

At that point the house was not burned. But by the time we came back the next day, the whole house, everything was burned, including the store. We had nowhere to go. So my parents went to a motel. The three of us went to my aunt's house. And that's how we went on. We lived at Aunt Janette's. She was in the city on Jonquil Ave., so I used her address and we went to school.

When we went back to school the following Monday, we walked into homeroom and we were all very close and we had been in the same class since ninth grade, and never had any kind of racial tension. I mean I went to school with black kids, Chinese kids, white kids. I walked in that day. And you know, everybody was kind of removed from the riot situation, except me. But they all had two cents to put in. A girl in the class, a black girl, she was a leader type of a person. And she got up and she said, and she was very militant about it, "And I want you to know that they got—they got exactly what they deserved!" I started crying. I had to leave the room. I'm crying now, but that one thing cut to me like nothing else could cut to me.

MARVIN MANDEL, SPEAKER OF THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES

The governor and Mayor D'Alesandro, Tommy, "young Tommy," were at the Fifth Regiment Armory. [Federal troops] were already on the outskirts of the city but couldn't come into the city unless the governor requested it. Governor Agnew was asking Tommy if Tommy wanted the troops to come into the city. And there was a lot of hesitancy on Tommy's part.

Finally, Agnew became upset, disgusted. He said, "Look, I'm going back to Annapolis. If you make up your mind, give me a call." And in the meantime, the Attorney General of the United States was calling, saying, in effect, "I can't leave those troops sitting out on the highway. Either you have to ask them to come on, or I'll have to send them back to the camp where they came from." So finally, after a lot of discussion, Tommy agreed that he wanted the troops to come in. In the meantime, the governor had declared a curfew that was to start that evening. So Agnew called the Attorney General of the United States, and the Attorney General immediately ordered the troops in.

And I'll tell you, it was a sight to behold, when they came into the Fifth Regiment Armory. I mean, in 25 minutes that commanding general had that whole place organized. He just walked [in] and said, "I'll put my office here, I'll put the communications here," and just absolutely organized it.

The commanding officer of [one] company was black, [his troops] were out on the floor, the press was around, and he was giving instructions as to what to do and how to handle the curfew. And [he] said, "If anybody's walking, you order them to halt. If they don't stop the first time, you order them to halt a second time. If he don't stop the second time, shoot him."

Well, a big gasp went up from the press and all—shoot him? And I'll never forget it; he turned around and looked right at the press, and said, "Let me tell you something. See all those men in this company? They've survived fighting in Vietnam, and I'm not going to let them get killed on the streets of Baltimore."

I've never forgotten that. And he just took charge, marched his men out, put them on the streets.

State Police Lieutenant Tom Smith [and I] decided to ride the streets to see if everything was under control. [We] went out in the police car, and we had a sergeant sitting in the back with a sawed-off shotgun. We were driving down Poplar Grove St. in Baltimore just as it was getting dark. There was a store there that had radios, televisions, all that sort of thing. Three people came out of that store—the window was broken; they were coming out of the front window carrying televisions, taking them out of the store. We stopped the car and we chased them. And I heard the sergeant pull back on his shotgun. And [I was] afraid he was going to shoot because they wouldn't stop; they were running, carrying this stuff; then they started throwing radios on the side. They carried the television. And Tom Smith and I were chasing them, and

[that sergeant] was right behind us. We caught two of them, but we didn't catch the third. We arrested them and took them into the Western Police Station and had them charged. The place was unbelievable. I mean, there were people all over the whole police station; it was just loaded with people that had been arrested and charged with violating the curfew, charged with breaking and entering.

There was one thing that happened after we released them to the police at the station. We went back in the car and rode back to East Baltimore. And one woman came out of her front door screaming, "I just killed him. I just killed him." Lieutenant Smith stopped the car and ran over to see what the problem was. And she had stabbed her husband. Killed him. So he arrested her. But that was how the mood was; everybody was all upset, everybody was fighting with everybody else.

That incident resulted in Governor Agnew becoming Vice President of the United States. And I'm telling you, that's a fact. The day after, he called the black community together—the leaders of the black community—and raised holy hell about everything that had happened. It hit all the newspapers and became a prime story. And at the next convention, when they were nominating people to run for president, he was nominated for vice president. Senator Louise Gore from Montgomery County was responsible for putting that together. She was Al Gore's cousin, and she was a Republican. Agnew was a Republican, and she took him to Nixon. It's fascinating, a riot resulting in a vice president.

JACK BOWDEN AND SUSAN WHITE-BOWDEN, REPORTERS WMAR-TV

Susan White-Bowden: It was the initial shock and sadness of this wonderful human being, but then . . . for the news people, it all became such traumatic turmoil, so fast, when the cities started erupting and burning and rioting and the focus was switched from the sadness of losing this wonderful person to how to control what had happened as a result of it.

Jack Bowden: [In the newsroom] that's primarily the only story we were doing every day. We'd go down to the Fifth Regiment Armory, which is where the National Guard was. That was the headquarters for everybody. The mayor, everybody went there. General Gelston—he was in charge of the National Guard. I remember one day, some tear gas canisters broke and we were all walking around crying, because tear gas permeated the entire Fifth Regiment Armory. But every day we were exposed to tear gas as they were trying to chase crowds, crowds of whites and blacks trying to get at each other.

[I remember] we were in a park. I was there, Wiley Daniels from Channel 13, I assume some other reporters . . . And there was this line, this phalanx of National Guardsmen, with their guns. Now, they weren't supposed to use any bullets; they were supposed to keep unloaded weapons to avoid any problems. But some of them had bullets. And they had bayonets. Anyway, a group of blacks assembled, and there was a lot of anger; I forget what was said, but anyway, they starting moving. We're standing in the middle, the Guards were down here, this group of people is coming at us. And clearly, it was going to be a violent clash. People were going to get hurt, maybe killed. And Wiley Daniels—[who was black]—got up on this park bench, and he says, "Hey! You all know who I am, I'm Wiley Daniels, Channel 13 . . . please stop. Just listen to me." And finally, he talked to them about how people are going to get hurt or killed here today, it's not worth this, please, we can talk, I'll try to intervene, maybe we can talk about what's going on.

There was resentment to the shut down of their communities, the military was coming through and all that. Anyway, he did what you're not supposed to do as a reporter; he got involved, he became part of the story. And that's one of the few times I can say I'm glad he did, or any reporter did, and I mentioned on the air that night, on my channel, I said, "Channel 13's Wiley Daniels prevented what could have been an extremely violent confrontation." And they did, they turned around, and they stopped, and there was no violence. So that was incredible. And my station allowed me to say that on the air about a reporter from another station getting involved and preventing violence.

Susan White-Bowden: I'll share a story from my point of view. Women didn't cover violent stories then. They weren't allowed to. I mean, there weren't many women reporters. I was the only one at Channel 2. There weren't many at the other stations. And they would not let me cover any stories that were directly related. I

wanted to go in and talk to families, I wanted to talk to mothers that I knew were there—I knew the stories were there—who were trying to talk their sons out of . . . staying off the street, staying out of harm's way, staying away from causing trouble or burning and looting. I knew it was there, but they wouldn't let me go in and do it.

It was close to Easter, in April, and they sent me down to the State Office Building, which is near the Fifth Regiment Armory, where all the troops were forming, to do a story about the advisability of dyeing baby chicks for Easter.

And I said, "You're not going to use this kind of story. There's very limited television news time, and to waste it on this kind of story . . . the city is burning down." Yes, we need a calming influence, we need to show the viewers that life goes on, that there's another perspective. And they sent me down, and we did an interview out in the median strip, between Eutaw, Howard St. . . . pretty spring day, I was in my light flowered dress, my little blond hair, and little baby chicks, and a spokesman from the Health Department, telling us that we probably shouldn't do this, dye these chicks for Easter.

We had to stop the interview to allow the National Guard troops to march behind us, so they wouldn't spoil our pretty picture that was in the frame of the camera. And they made me go on the air that night . . . report this story as if nothing else was going on in Baltimore. And I said to myself, that'll never happen again.

RASHIDA FOREMAN-BEY, 8-YEAR-OLD CHILD

I was eight years old when Dr. King was assassinated. When the news hit, we just burst out crying, I can remember my mother begging my brothers not to go out, I had brothers that were 12 and 13 years older than me. She was begging for them not to go out the night of the curfew. I guess a lot of what I remember was the anger that went through my family. Everybody in the black community knew that the United States government was behind the assassination of Dr. King, they knew that they wanted him dead.

There were National Guards, troops everywhere, trucks, everything. The junction looked like it was tore up. We rode the 15 bus, we rode down Emerson St. to Poplar Grove and from Emerson and Payson St. areas. Emerson St. was tore up . . . looked like a war had come through. I remember the fear I felt looking. My mother had to calm me down on the bus. My mother held my hand extra tight.

I remember conversations that everybody was having, begging their sons, everybody was begging their sons not to go out. Most of all, I know for my brothers, everybody felt like they had to do something. That's for any oppressed people on the planet Earth, wherever it is, the way they respond to feeling powerless, is to by any means necessary, to gain that power and to take over what is going on. It comes out the way it comes out.

Before the riots, you could go into the store and hand your money and buy whatever you wanted to buy. After the riot it got to be where there were storefronts with gates to pretty much shut and lock, bulletproof windows started to come up in corner stores, and when you wanted to purchase something, there was bulletproof glass between you and the store owner. Many of the white store owners closed down the stores and didn't open up their stores in the community anymore.

Many of those things were never even rebuilt, because when any kind of tragedy hits a community anywhere, there should be some kind of rebuilding. That never happened in our community. It was interesting that with Katrina they are not rebuilding that either. It's like a boil. An ooze and pus sore. It's hurting, hurting and finally it erupts and after all the ooze and pus and craziness comes out of that boil, then the healing process can really start. Then you really get a chance to see what is inside of it. I think America had been living under this illusion and pain for so long and African-Americans born here in America, we had been living under this for so long and it finally erupted and the healing process had to begin for us as a community.

But the people that could really make changes in our communities moved out of the community. The people we looked to, doctors and lawyers, professional people that not only lived in the community, weren't there anymore. Of course, right after the riots, right after we started to rebuild, drugs hit our community, heroin hit our community.

People say black on black crime, but you know, the fact was, even in destroying our community, we didn't own anything in that community, we didn't own stores in the community, very few of us did. Most people were renting. It was our community and it wasn't our community.

Suffering from post-traumatic slave syndrome, all of us should be going into therapy right now. None of us got therapy. We never purged ourselves with that pain.

And I don't know how our parents were able to do it. Our parents were able to teach us to love unconditionally because my mother was real loving and real peaceful. She taught me to love unconditionally and know who my enemy was at the same time.

LOUIS RANDALL, PHYSICIAN, BUSINESS OWNER

I don't know the exact dates of the starting of the riots but around that time I was delivering a baby at Provident on Division St. and all of the sudden we heard this noise and we looked down the street and they were setting buildings on fire on the next block. Just massive fire, all of these people running up and down the street. And then there was the usual bunch of people taking advantage of looting . . . I ran home because I had built a home before that in West Baltimore, bought a lot and built a home and I ran home and attached my hoses and got permission to buy a gun and I was going to hose my house down because they were attacking anybody who looked like he had money and it was part race and part just chaos.

It was a chaotic time and I'll never forget it, carrying this gun, I couldn't shoot a gun, I was in the Army years ago and I had forgotten all about shooting . . . I did get a sharp shooters medal but don't ask me how I got it . . . probably the target was there and I just guessed it . . . but anyway I had been running through the halls of Garwyn Medical Center with my pistol and I said, "Boy I hope nobody shows up cause I swear I don't want to shoot anybody." Those were probably some of the vivid memories in places like East Baltimore, they were wrecking Gay St. and burning . . . and all sorts of protests and when Martin Luther King was killed it just all went berserk, cause they killed the man. But we were so busy creating a life for ourselves in a normal so-called American way that I think that is a part of the history that gets lost. We were very very conservative. We wore shirts and ties and to see all this rioting going on . . . what was all of this . . . why are you . . . because we were making some progress in kind of a quiet way.

TOM CARNEY, "PIGTOWN" TEENAGER

I grew up in an area that is known colloquially as Pigtown. The neighborhood was bounded [by] Washington Blvd., Monroe St., and the harbor, which is now the center of downtown Baltimore where the Galleria and all the shops are. A big event in our lives was to walk across Hamburg St., which was a large bridge spanning the railroad tracks, and watch the railroad cars delivering whatever it was that they were carrying to the area which is now Camden Yards, the baseball stadium. It used to be a large warehouse for all the products that the trains delivered; which is how Pigtown got its name. That area is where they ran the pigs off the cars and through the streets to the butcher shops which were on the lower part of Pigtown. You saw only white faces in the buses, only white faces in the cabs, and only white faces walking the streets buying products from the multitude of stores on Washington Blvd. There were certain streets where blacks lived and there were certain streets where whites lived. The area was divided by Catholics, non-Catholics, Germans, Italians, and Irish. I lived in the Irish sector of Pigtown.

We rarely, if ever, spoke to non-Catholics. It was a very ethnically controlled community and you tried to date, meet, greet, on this same level that you were asked to do by your heritage. We had a saloon, every neighborhood had one on the corner of some main street; and inside that saloon were members of the same religion and same ethnic background. They would congregate when the paychecks would come in and they were entirely Catholic, entirely Irish or entirely German.

How did we know what streets not to go down? It was handed down much like the secrets of families. It is part of what we do in America. It is part of the unspoken racism, rather than the outspoken, blatant racism. As you were leaving the house you were asked where you were going. When you delivered the response you were asked, "Do you know how to get there?" "Do you know how to get there" was not a question that sought out whether you knew the directions, it sought that you knew the path. And the path was those streets that were where non-whites lived and non-Catholics. It is passed down in the secret way where you observed conversations, you observed behaviors and you took walks as a child with your parents and you took the streets that they took, the directions that they took. You observed their behaviors. Much of what we do is what we observe and what we understand; rather than knowing the meaning of it.

By the '60s, things were changing. Blacks that had stayed on their own streets now walked on white streets. The dynamic that happened was where whites were when I was a child, walk where they want, do what they want, it became the opposite. White people fled back inside their homes. It was the fact that blacks had a voice in Martin Luther King. The civil rights movement was active and with his marches they marched.

They marched down the streets that before they could not walk down. That was their demonstration. The world had changed. Kennedy had been shot, the economy wasn't great, there was a war going on in Vietnam, people were getting drafted. The culture of the paternal white father was gone, and their children were being sent off to Vietnam to die. Their cooks, their cleaners, and their sweepers were now out on the streets saying, "No more, we are not doing this any more. We are not going down this road ever again."

[The riots, the times . . .] I think it's one of those things you don't know at the time but it changes you forever. The death of Kennedy, Lee Harvey Oswald being shot live on television . . . All of these things weren't supposed to happen. And your childhood is supposed to be calm and peaceful and caring. Vietnam is going on. All these changes are happening before you can ever sort them. A college professor once said that probably the most insidious thing that happened during this whole period was that all these things not only got inside of your head, but they got inside of your family, they got inside of your heart and your soul, and you were making determinations for the rest of your life of what's right, what's wrong, what's correct, what's not correct.

You grow up to believe that authority is good, the police are good, the army is good, that they are your safety net and they are looking out for you. And then you realize they really are, but there is a whole side of a population of this country that they are not looking out for, that they don't care one whit about. And those things come to reckoning when you see something like this happen. You [wonder]—subliminally, but you wonder it nevertheless—how can somebody be so angry? What did somebody do to make them so angry? Because that many people don't just walk around that angry [for no reason]; that's just not going to happen. So it triggered a lot in me to go find out why. What happened? What really happened? What is this all about? Who are these people? Who is Medgar Evers? Who is Martin Luther King? Who are all these people who are getting shot in front of their homes or getting shot in front of their hotel rooms? And who's shooting them? Why are they shooting them? Why do we just decide one day if I don't agree with someone, I get to shoot them? It's a bizarre way of living. It took me back to the stories I had heard about Wyatt Earp and Billy the Kid, gunslingers that walked the streets of the country, I mean gun battles. I thought the worst was happening. I thought for a long time the country was going to split, fall apart. Civil war, whatever that looked like. I wasn't sure forces inside of this country were bound and determined not to give in and take whatever [they] want, simply because that's the only way [they're] going to get it. So it did, it changed me forever, absolutely.

DOROTHY LAMOUR HURST, YOUNG C&P TELEPHONE WORKER

I worked in the telephone company that was predominately white and I guess we, everybody was polite, and you know, you stayed away from certain subjects and you knew that; at least I felt as though being black, I would have to do a hundred percent more to maintain my job than some of my other white counterparts because you could see that in your daily work, that we had to work even harder for just menial jobs as a typist. So it was kind of, you know, you talked, but you didn't talk. You avoided but you didn't avoid. Everybody was walking on eggshells, I might say.

I was in CORE, the Congress of Racial Equality. What they did, we did, was we went around and we tried to open up restaurants, to get blacks to be able to come in. Ah, we did a lot of picketing of different locations throughout Baltimore City; some of the department stores had things of that nature . . . There were some restaurants that we could not eat in and there were some stores we couldn't even go in to shop. Ah, I laugh at it now because the Hecht Company, of course it's Macy's now, but you couldn't go; you could go in there but you couldn't try hats on. You couldn't try anything on that would touch your body.

To me, if my memory doesn't fail me, it just seemed it was kind of negative and they really couldn't understand why we would be so deeply emotional about the losing of Dr. Martin Luther King. I don't think people really realized how important he was to us, or the magnitude of what we felt for him. I don't really think they understood that until after his death . . . It's like somebody gets mad and the only thing they can hit is what they see in front of them.

You don't know what you felt. You didn't want to have these riots. You didn't want the place to be looted. Then another part of you—you felt like you had to do something because look what they've done. Look who they killed.

[After the riots] there was a lot of distrust; a feeling of here we go again; do we have to start all over again. What we going to do from here? Are we going to have any type of equality or what? So that's basically what it was—a lot of mistrust and confusion because different people was trying to take over the "movement" from Martin Luther King and it was just a lot of mumbo jumbo.

When I was in the civil rights movement, there were a lot of people in there who were of a different race who really spent a lot of money and time and supported us. They didn't really have to do anything. Then you said, okay. You're not all—you know. Because that was one thing that Martin Luther King had taught us, was the character of the person; not the color of their skin; and you can't get to know anybody's character if all you do is look at the skin and don't ever talk to nobody.

ANTHEM AT GRADUATION

For James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938) and Jimi Hendrix (1942-1970)

We sing the Book of Numbers
Mums, gladiolas swelling in their ribboned dress

Vaudeville of rejoicing, each a Lazarus
A choir of black faces, staged

Not run away but faith rehearsed
In normal schools for coloreds
In run-down auditoriums

There is a prayer after despair
Be not afraid

Kathleen Hellen

DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.: A NIGERIAN PERSPECTIVE • *Kathleen Corcoran*

The bluebirds fly over the White Cliffs of Dover.
Tomorrow you just wait and see.
There'll be peace and laughter, joy ever after
Tomorrow when Nigeria will be free.

I awoke from siesta to the sound of the young girls singing in the playing field beside the bungalow which I shared with two other young American women. Their voices grew louder as they counted the hours until midnight when Nigeria would achieve its long awaited independence from Great Britain. Each day since I had arrived as a new, enthusiastic teacher at Cornelia Connelly Secondary School in Uyo, Nigeria, the students had been practicing their songs and dances for the Independence celebrations. [. . .]

The next day after little sleep, our students, along with the nuns who ran the school and the entire faculty, joined all the other students in the province for a march-past at the Uyo stadium. The British district officer was there in full regalia, the new Nigerian D.O. beside him. After speeches about the peaceful transfer of power, the British Union Jack was lowered and the new Nigerian green and white flag was raised as everyone in the stadium sang the national anthem, "Nigeria, we hail thee, our own dear native land . . ." On October 1st, 1960, Nigeria was the second African nation to gain its independence. [. . .]

Back in the States history was also being made. As the civil rights movement proceeded under the leadership of Dr. Martin Luther King, blacks were in the midst of a struggle for their own freedom, a struggle which had been marked in recent months by the bombing of the house of one of the first black students to enter Little Rock High School; by a club carrying sheriff in Montgomery, Alabama, trying to clear black demonstrators from a lunch counter "sit-in"; by white youths in Houston beating a Negro and carving six "K's" in his chest; and by Reverend King leading protests against voter discrimination. One such case occurred in Fayette County, Tennessee, when black sharecroppers were threatened and kicked out of their homes because they had registered or tried to register to vote in the coming election between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon.

But America seemed far away as I settled into life at the school during my first year of teaching English. I was Form Mistress for one of the Upper School classes, and not long after the Independence celebrations a group of these 15- and 16-year-old girls began coming to my bungalow to visit in the evenings between dinner and night study. [. . .]

One evening in November, 1960, the girls were full of excitement, for the news had spread quickly. "Dr. Martin Luther King is coming to Nigeria!" We passed around the newspaper with Dr. King's picture on the front page. Dr. Nnamdie Azikiwe, Nigeria's most popular leader, who would later be elected president, had invited Dr. King to attend his inauguration

as Nigeria's first African Governor General. Dr. King would arrive in Lagos to attend the festivities, for as he pointed out, African leaders such as Dr. Azikiwe are heroes to African-American college students. We all wished we could go cross-country to Lagos and catch a glimpse of Dr. King, or that he would visit our own region and the nearby towns of Aba and Calabar. I was surprised at how much the girls knew about Dr. King and events in America. I wondered if Dr. King had any idea that he was a hero to Nigerian students such as these girls in Uyo, or to Africans across the continent who equated their own struggles for freedom with the struggles of African Americans for their freedom.

One night in mid-October nearly a year later, the girls seemed subdued. We talked a bit about classes and the School Certificate exams that were just six weeks away. Finally Nkemjika changed the subject. "Please Miss, why didn't they want to let James Meredith go to University?" The Nigerian newspapers had reported on the violence and riots surrounding the efforts of James Meredith to become the first black student to enroll in the University of Mississippi. I talked to them about segregation and the struggle for civil rights throughout the country. However, the story in the Nigerian newspaper, rather than condemning the people of Mississippi, congratulated President Kennedy on his efforts to restore order by sending in 5000 federal troops. These young girls seemed to want to believe in America's innocence, showing a kind of sympathy or understanding of the hatred and injustice by comparing it with their own tribal animosities, which indeed later led to the Biafran War. After this first discussion about American racial issues a barrier was broken, and the girls began asking questions they had probably held back for months.

"In history classes in America, do students learn about slavery?" Paulina wanted to know. I replied that slavery was a terrible part of American history but that under President Lincoln a civil war was fought to end slavery. Florence's question asking how black people are treated in my hometown was the most difficult. "I went to segregated schools from grade school to my high school graduation in 1956," I explained, "but the 1954 Supreme Court had ruled against segregation, and the schools in my town are now being integrated." We discussed Rosa Parks, student protest marches, the "Little Rock Nine" with federal troops escorting the students into the school, and Martin Luther King's leadership to bring about civil rights.

Yet I didn't tell them that students had hung and burned a black dummy in front of my own high school to protest integration. I didn't tell them about the time when a friend and I were walking down Main St., we approached a young black man standing on the sidewalk in front of the taxi stand. Suddenly Molly stared at him and muttered, "Get out of my way you black S.O.B." He stepped off the curb as we passed, and I saw the desperate, haunted look in his eyes.

I didn't tell them about the neighbors who shook their heads and warned my parents that if I went to Nigeria, I might end up marrying a black man.

I didn't tell them of the story my mother

told about the Ku Klux Klan marching through the streets of Logan and Mother recognizing her Uncle Claude's shoes beneath the white robes and hood.

I didn't tell them about the night my father was born in Hinton, West Virginia, and a raging crowd drove William Lee through the streets and up to Cemetery Hill where they lynched him.

But I could have told them of the story I'd heard about my father as a young man new in Logan, protesting the way the white coal miners made a black man go to the end of the line at the company store. That night the sheriff pounded on his hotel door and snarled, "Now I know you're new, but I'm warning you, that's not the way we do things around here."

I could have told them of the times my father sat in front of the TV news cringing and shaking his head at scenes of police brutality—the dogs, the hoses—during civil rights protests, and how he listened, silent and thoughtful, whenever he heard Dr. Martin Luther King speak.

Through my students I was able to see my country and its struggles to achieve Dr. King's dream of equality. And I wondered how my students saw me, their white teacher from a country where students like them were struggling for freedom.

Years later, in 1995, I reminisced with Nkemjika about those many visits in the early '60s. I had seen her photo and an article about her becoming the first woman ambassador from an African country, the Nigerian ambassador to Ireland. My family and I were planning a trip to Ireland that summer to visit my husband's family, and I wrote to Nkemjika, now Madame Ambassador Nkem Wadibia-Anyanwu, asking if we might visit her. A letter from her in longhand was full of memories of her schoolgirl days and assurances that we would be welcome at the embassy in Dublin. My former student, now dressed in elegant Nigerian formal attire instead of the blue and beige school uniform I remembered, canceled all appointments and gave the day to me, my husband and two grown children. She welcomed us into her spacious office, and we recalled those early '60s, formative years for us both. [. . .]

Before we said good-bye, I gave her an essay I had saved all these years, one she had written for English class that year of Nigerian independence. In it she spoke of a future of justice and opportunity, a future that Dr. Martin Luther King had dreamed of when he wrote the following words in his essay for the October 11, 1961 issue of the *New York Times*, "The Time for Freedom Has Come":

"The liberation struggle in Africa has been the greatest single international influence on American Negro students. Frequently I hear them say that if their African brothers can break the bonds of colonialism, surely the American Negro can break Jim Crow."

A SLOW-FILLING CLOUD

Ft. McHenry splits the river, the brown river
that drains the city. The harbor,

a garden of booms and girders,
weekend boaters, and rafts of debris.

History animates the ramparts
where privates stacked the 18-pound balls
and surgeons wrapped the fallen in cloth.

What blows through the marsh,
like wind? Through the trees.

Tourists breathe their citizenship.
We breathe

with the sparrow, the widow,
her 15-star banner. With her neighbors

the night of the battle. Who tripped on the cobbles
in flight from attackers who march with us now
breathing a desert—its own forts and rivers.

What inspiration: this river that flows
from faraway farms where blue and grey brothers

shot at each other. Those ruddy waters
still rise to rain on this fort and the oceans beyond.

We breathe a republic of rockets and rivers,
of tourists, of flotsam, of flags and of song.

Like a thread, like a knot,
a map that ascends with the river's mild vapors.

This is history. A slow-filling cloud.

Jennifer Wallace

We shall overcome.

ART COHEN

remembering the

Civil Rights Movement

1955-1968

remembering *the movement*

IN DECEMBER 1960, YEARS before the Washington, D.C., "march for jobs and freedom," Dr. Martin Luther King preached to our packed church, the Germantown Unitarian church in Philadelphia. He titled his sermon "The Three Dimensions of a Complete Life."

The sermon was not what one would expect from a southern preacher of any color. It had none of the customary intense, mesmerizing, often wrathful incantations and almost stream-of-consciousness chanting from biblical verses. It was, rather, the measured philosophical musings, with religious overtones, on how one could live a rewarding, ethical life, from the viewpoint of Dr. Martin Luther King, doctor of philosophy.

Such was my introduction to Dr. King. We "liberals" in the church were surprised, but refreshed, by his precepts. From our rather insulated world, we had often tried to reach out to our church's black members. Their response to us was as varied as they were: some expressed impatience with what they regarded as their white friends' "fixation on integration"; others prophesied (correctly, sad to say) that "race relations are going to get a whole lot worse before they get better."

In time, we learned of the proposed march on Washington. My good friend, Dee Smith, planned to go with a group from the YWCA, where she worked, and she suggested I join them. Could I leave my three daughters with Blanche Cannon, who cleaned house for me and had looked after the girls all their lives? I almost felt I should ask Blanche to go instead; she showed little sign of caring about "politics" but I knew she admired Dr. King. Evelyn, my middle daughter, insisted that she should go with me, but some demonstrations do turn violent; I was unwilling to chance her going on this one; and I was undecided whether to go myself.

Then we heard the news of a black church bombing, and the death of two small girls who were in the church. I immediately decided to march. I broke in a new pair of Hush Puppy shoes, wanting no blisters from a day of walking.

Almost everyone on the train, except Dee and me, was black. I suppose it was the first time in my life I'd known the feeling of being completely outnumbered and surrounded by people of a different color. I wish I could say we made good friends with all the folks in our car. Instead, feeling rather self-conscious about our skin color, we spotted a white foursome, representing their synagogue, and buddied up with them for the ride to Washington.

Once off the train, we marched toward the Lincoln Memorial. We sang "We Shall Overcome" until we had almost no voices left. We sang "free-ee-dom" until it came out "dum-free." The day grew hotter and hotter, but no one complained: the atmosphere was that of a church school picnic, with love and good will in the air. I suppose there were a fair number of people who found the heat too much for them. We saw first aid stations at the ready. One young woman fainted, and was passed over our heads to the nearest ambulance.

By the time Dr. King spoke, I felt so emotionally drained that I scarcely listened. Later, Dee gave me a recording of his "I Have a Dream" speech; and I used to play it on MLK day.

"I Have a Dream" was just the right speech, at just the right time. Also just right was our song, "We Shall Overcome." Perhaps in the long run, peaceful means will prevail, but in the year 2007 it is hard to have patience and hope.

Anne Horn Ballard

APRIL IN FLORIDA WAS ALWAYS hot and we had no air conditioning in 1968. Family life was what we knew and the future is what we looked forward to. Back in 1968 life was still full of sweet promises that you could count on: proms, garage parties, Sunday school, and 4th of July cookouts, sitting under streetlights sharing secrets with your best friend until your mother called you home.

That spring day started out like all the others with the sun gradually slipping away while dinner smells came from the kitchen. I stood in the living room watching the television with my family and saw my mother crying, her fist slamming against her thigh. Only my father was sitting down while the rest of us stood staring at the television. I didn't understand at first because it was only the news and that came on every day at 5PM, only this day something was off, something was different. My mother cried out that there would be no more hope, that all was lost, that the bastards had won again. Shell-shocked, no one thought to comfort eachother because we weren't sure about what it all meant as we watched the screen in front of us. Only my mother seemed to understand.

My father sat quiet and still on the sofa. In shock, I continued to stand in front of the TV next to my mother as I began to understand what had happened. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been shot dead. He taught us the power of turning the other cheek, of plowing on even when the dogs bit you and the hoses tore your skin, even when you looked into the eyes of man and saw only hate.

My version of the dream was supposed to begin in less than five months and now it had a tear in its fabric. Hate and fear were trying to rip it apart. Atlanta had energy; it was the place I was headed to join the other children of the dream to make way for a different life. Hate and fear may have killed him, but it did not destroy our dream. Hundreds of us headed to Atlanta that year to keep the dream alive.

Jackie Belt

MY HEAD DOWN, I HURRIED TO class a little late, as usual—a freshman trying hard to get things right. It was a cold early morning in 1962 as I crossed the mall in front of the Tower on the University of Texas campus in Austin along with swarms of other students. Something different—a quality of sound—grabbed my attention and I looked up. At the far end of the mall, several hundred students of many races stood in a line, arms linked, all the way from one side to the other. I slowed down and listened, but I could not hear what they were saying until I was closer.

They were all looking intently at the top of the library below the Tower. In unison, several hundred quiet voices read over and over the words inscribed there: "You shall know the truth and the truth will set you free."

Feeling a bit shaken, I went on to my class, which may well have been American literature. One of our assignments that semester was to read works of Henry David Thoreau, one of the original civil disobedience men.

About 40 years later, I learned that Martin Luther King first heard of the concept of nonviolent struggle when he was a freshman in college, studying Thoreau's essay "Civil Disobedience." I read that King was at first skeptical that it had any potential as an agent of social change.

Disturbed, I studied the upturned faces that morning as I walked around the end of the line of people toward the building where my class met. Later, when I told my parents about the incident in a phone call home, my father said, "I wouldn't get mixed up with that civil rights stuff if I were you."

"Don't worry, I won't," I said. But I still wish I had had the courage to skip my class and join them.

Judy Callarman

MY HUSBAND AND I HAD HEARD W.E.B. Dubois speak in the 1950s in Berkeley. We were active in what was called "race relations" in the 1960s and were moving toward an understanding of "civil rights."

He didn't want to go to this march, and he didn't want me to go. He said he was afraid for me. He said he feared being left with two small children to raise.

It was one of the few times in our marriage that I stood up to him (the last time was our divorce). I'm still proud that this event was one I chose. I said, "I'm going in a bus with the Unitarians for God's sake. This is not a dangerous thing to do."

When our bus arrived on the Mall and I saw that tremendous crowd, I was filled with joy. We were so far back we could see very little and despite the loudspeakers, I'm not sure I heard all of Dr. King's famous speech.

It was enough to be there.

Norma Chapman

I WAS A YOUNG TEACHER AT Morgan State College. Martin Luther King was to speak at a special impromptu assembly on campus. I was hurrying to my classroom to leave a message on the blackboard telling my students to come to the auditorium to hear him when, just across the way, strolling toward me, I spotted our President, Dr. Martin Jenkins—and walking with him was Martin Luther King!

I was by nature shy and withdrawn, but something propelled me from the path, across the untouchable grass, to Dr. Jenkins' side. He grinned and introduced me. Martin Luther King, even in this casual setting, was an overwhelming presence. His voice, when he courteously acknowledged the introduction, was the same voice I had heard so often, but it had a resonance the media could never convey. He smiled and extended his hand. The touch of hands was an electric moment. I was in the presence of one who was willing to die for what he believed. That is an awesome, almost overwhelming realization. In that fleeting moment, I knew, as we all knew, how it was going to end. As I rushed on to my classroom, I felt the warmth of his hand encompassing mine.

Martin Luther King's speech at Morgan was his usual combination of good preaching, brilliant scholarship, irrefutable logic, and exciting rhetoric. Afterward, I returned to my classroom to find a number of my students waiting for me to resume our usual routine. For once I was angry with them for coming to class. What could I have taught them that was anywhere near as important as what they would have gotten from being with him?

As the years unfolded, the world paid homage to Martin Luther King's wisdom and courage. But the shifting political tides brought other ideas and strategies, different answers to questions that are far too complicated for single pat answers. Dr. King's own vision broadened. Mine did, too, and I saw sense in other views than his.

My memories of the days after his death are still painful. I began to question the old assumptions—and, I am still questioning. Part of the horror was that the violence was so antithetical to Martin Luther King's teachings of peace and love. Another part of the horror was the conviction that this upheaval was a symptom of this nation's sickness which is rooted in endemic racism and which lies far deeper than most of us can fathom.

I wanted Martin Luther King to be ours exclusively because we needed him so desperately. But the years have taught me that he belonged to the world, that he spoke for us all.

Eugenia Collier

ON THE EVENING OF DR. KING'S assassination I was driving to a Parent Teachers Association meeting at P.S. 103. I was enjoy-

ing the soothing music on the car radio when the program was interrupted by the terrible news. I pulled over and parked. I couldn't believe what I heard. After some hesitation, I went on to the meeting. When we fully realized what had happened, we were dismissed. The streets were deserted.

My home faced a golf course on Forest Park Ave., normally a busy artery. During the following week, traffic practically stopped. One car drove by every hour or two. The U.S. Army bivouacked on the golf course — tents, soldiers, army trucks. Our peaceful neighborhood was like a war zone.

Genevieve W. Mason

I REMEMBER CLOSING OUR OFFICE in Boston and our entire staff marching in the city's spontaneous protest of Dr. King's assassination. We were all white and I think it says something about the power of the man—and our need for him—that we were all white. Many years later, living on Nantucket Island, I noticed it was business as usual on Martin Luther King Day. But several days later, taking the ferry back to the mainland, I witnessed a sight that was, in its own way, a celebration of the man and what he stood for. We passed a black yachtsman in yellow rain gear driving his 40-footer through high water. Hand on the tiller, he was no helpless Winslow Homer castaway lost in the Gulf Stream with no hope of rescue. And I thought of Martin Luther King.

Avery Colt

THE ROSE BOWL GAME WAS TIED at half-time. The bands had strutted, and now the announcer was urging us back to the stands to observe a moment of silence for the still raw and recent death of Martin Luther King. It was a slow climb through the crowd, and just as I found my row, everyone stood up and a hush rang through the stands. It was time to stop and remember. I was out in the aisle, not back in my seat, separate but trying to focus on the commitment of this man who believed, and got us all to believe, in brotherhood, this man who had radiated nonviolence, this man whose murder still shocked the world. Would his dream ever live again? His loss was a huge hole in the sky.

I was alone, out in the aisle. Then the black women along my row joined hands, and the last one included me.

Carol Deering

AT THE TIME OF THE 1967 DETROIT Riots I was 15 years of age. I guess you would say that it is the 40th Anniversary of the 1967 Detroit Riots, but it is an anniversary I don't care to celebrate! I don't know about you, but the summer of 1967 was a traumatic experience for me.

At the time of the riots, I was living on the eastside of Detroit. Though the riots started on 12th St., it left a profound effect on me for the next three summers. I hated to see summer come due to being afraid that a riot would happen again.

What I saw were angry people, death, destruction and greed! Why would you loot and burn to destruction your own neighborhood? It did not make sense to me then and it doesn't make sense to me now and I'm in my fifties.

I stayed close to home, so the curfew implemented for the evenings did not affect me. People like my mother, who worked in the afternoon and evening, were supposed to be given some type of pass to show why they were out after the curfew.

I remember my mother was not home at her regular time from work. I waited at the back door worrying that she was in jail due to not having that pass. It was stated, if you did not have an excuse why you were out after the curfew, you were hauled off to jail.

When my mother came home, I broke down and cried. Matter of fact, during this time, I

could not eat, sleep and my nerves were shot!

I remember my father woke us up at 2AM telling us that the music store around the corner and the pawn shop were on fire. People had looted those establishments earlier in the day. I'd asked myself, why did my father wake us up? I was finally sleeping. Well, I was messed up after that.

My parents and our neighbors hosed down their garages with water because it was a threat people were going to burn down our street. It was one of the nicest streets in the neighborhood. Again, I was messed up.

What also disappointed me is when the firemen were attempting to put out the fire at our corner drugstore and I saw a couple of the deacons from our neighborhood church taking pictures of the firemen's efforts with cameras that had price tags HANGING from them.

I've read reports that police brutality, economic and social factors contributed to the riots.

I will agree that there were problems with the Detroit Police Department, but to loot and burn down your own neighborhood to get a new camera, clothing and furniture does not make any SENSE! Also, did it make sense that LIVES were lost during this time?

Though I don't know what a person feels from their experiences in a war-torn country, I know I never, never want to see anything like the summer of 1967 again!

Let us PRAY that some day all Nations can come together in Peace!

Chrystal J. Edwards

AN INDICATION OF HOW THINGS stood at that time is the fact that the state of Georgia refused to shut down government concerns for the funeral of Martin Luther King. After the assassination, riots ensued and the slogan "Burn, Baby, Burn" came into being. The era of the peaceful demonstration seemed to have ended in chaos. Hoping to ward off further actions, Atlanta planned programs for its youth, including one at Emmaus House, a settlement house only blocks from "Daddy King's" church. I volunteered there for a summer.

Directed by Sister Mary Rose, the program included lunch, field trips, access to a playground, and games. We were schooled in the Laubach Method of teaching reading—the "Each one teach one" method that had been used so successfully in Africa. Sister Mary Rose seemed to have underground connections to all the Catholics in Atlanta who could help and she never hesitated to call on them. One man worked at Rich's department store and helped to outfit the kids. Sister Mary Rose arranged for fresh fruit for the children, and planned camping trips at Jekyll Island.

These children, in a sense, were the children that Martin Luther King spoke of in his "I have a dream" speech. They lived in a ghetto section of the city not far from his home. They were streetwise. Some were raised by grandmothers. Most had no father living at home.

Some of those children had a chance, perhaps a good chance, to create a good life, but the risks were many. When I left Emmaus House for the last time I took a deep breath and sobbed all the way home. Something good had happened there. We all hoped the kids had gotten something they would carry with them—the optimism, the kindness, the trust, the possibilities.

Blanche Farley

DEEPLY INVOLVED IN THE CIVIL rights movement of the '60s, my parents opened our home to SNCC volunteers who were coming to New York City for training seminars. Two people had, one at a time, stayed with us. One was a dark brown man, I think his name was Greg. The other was a small slim woman with the unlikely name of Tut Tate. Tut has lived in my memory all these years and a

little while ago when I was getting ready to take seven kids of various ages on a civil rights trip south, I looked her up on the Web.

It was no surprise to find she'd remained involved in the civil rights movement all her life, moving from voter registration drives in the '60s to union work in the next decades. I was able to recover all this information in her obituary. She'd died young, at only 49, from lung cancer. Although I'd missed her death by several years, I felt a hole open up in my universe.

Reading the obit through carefully it slowly dawned on me that she'd been a mere six years my senior. As I was attending elementary school in Manhattan, she was risking her life registering voters in Mississippi. She was only 18.

I couldn't remember the games we used to play together, but I had a clear sense-memory of our lives intertwining deeply for those few weeks she spent living with us. After learning of her abbreviated life, I went hunting through some boxes where I was sure I had a physical memento from her. I sat very still on the bed as I opened the folded letter dated June 17, 1966.

"I know you must be angry with me by now for not writing, but there is so much happening here in Mississippi at present that I hardly have or find time to sleep. I haven't had five minutes to myself since I've been back to Mississippi. I have been taking pictures of the march during the day and on guard duty during the night. I hope your mother received my letters. It is so hard to get a letter out now, people are always watching for us to mail a letter so they could stop the mail."

Later she asks me if I'm still "doing some of the things we used to do (smile)." And I search my brain to remember what those things were but all that swims forward is the wonderful feeling I had when I was with her.

As I carefully return the letter to its place I am remembering the fear my parents felt when she returned to Mississippi after her training in New York. When we didn't hear from her for longer and longer periods my mother would hope out loud that she was still alive. Even though I knew people had been killed I couldn't believe it could actually happen and I would say, "Oh, Mom."

As I grew up through the rest of that decade reading the news and becoming increasingly aware of what was happening, I still don't think I ever quite understood, until I read this letter to the young me all these years later, how terribly dangerous her life had been. And what enormous courage she had.

Stephanie B. Gibson

FOR THE PAST 30-SOME YEARS, I've been atoning for my earlier sins of unawareness and indifference. Growing up in Baltimore in the 1930s and '40s, I accepted that things were the way they were supposed to be. No African Americans lived in our suburban neighborhood of Gardenville. In Pigtown, where my grandparents lived, African Americans inhabited shabby houses on several alley-like streets.

It didn't seem strange or unfair to me that only white people patronized the Earle Theatre or bought pastries at the Woodlea Bakery or attended our church and school—St. Anthony's. Shopping as a teen in Hutzler's, Hochschild-Kohn and other downtown department stores, I didn't think it odd that a staff of all white salesladies waited on white customers. I took it for granted that the policemen blowing their whistles at Howard and Lexington Streets were white, and that a white motorman carried us on the #15 streetcar back home to Gardenville.

The one African American I knew was Oscar. He worked as a janitor at the manufacturing plant where my father worked. On Saturdays Oscar cut our lawn and helped my father with chores. Daddy made sure Oscar had as good a lunch as ours, but he ate in our basement clubroom, while we

sat at the kitchen table. My sister and I were taught to call adults by a title—Sgt. Klingenberg, Sr. Gabriella, Aunt Lill and so on. We called Oscar just Oscar. I didn't question these practices.

During the '50s I taught first grade in the Baltimore County Public Schools. Although Brown v. Board of Education changed the law, not much really changed. The last year I taught, I had one African American little girl in my class.

During the '60s, I confess that I didn't pay much attention to the civil rights movement: I was too busy having a baby every other year. We lived in Howard County and our children's classmates were mostly white.

It took the terrible tragedy of April 4, 1968 to finally get my attention. I wept as I watched the news on television. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.—a man my age, a man with a wife and children, a man who stood for non-violence, for peace, and for justice—had been gunned down for his beliefs. He was murdered because he wanted all people to have the same rights that I had taken for granted. Dr. King's death awakened me to the injustice that until that day I had accepted or ignored.

Dr. King's death changed my life. I'm a member of the NAACP and read *Crisis Magazine* from cover to cover. When a racial incident occurred in Kent County, Maryland, where I now live, I was at the forefront in creating a black-white dialogue. I helped elect the first African American to serve on the Kent County Council, and I lobbied the council to create a Human Relations Commission to address discrimination.

Nine years ago, I initiated Kent County's first county-wide Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., celebration. In this small, rural county, the Annual Kent County Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Breakfast brings together close to 400 citizens of different backgrounds to honor Dr. King's legacy and to raise money to support the kinds of initiatives that Dr. King championed.

I'm still atoning.

Ann Hennessy

FILMS WERE MORE INDISPENSABLE to our lives back then, with people spending hours over cold coffee discussing Antonioni and Bergman and Truffaut, and the French New Wave and Italian neo-realism, and the auteur theory, Marxist film theory, feminist film theory and who advanced silent film more: Chaplin, Keaton or Lloyd?

But film was no mere abstraction, a way to fill in the hours with high-falutin ideas or vocabulary borrowed from Pauline Kael in *The New Yorker* or Andrew Sarris in *The Village Voice*. It also refracted our life, bouncing it back to us with a clarity and power that sometimes we would have preferred to ignore. Yet, under the pressure cooker of the times, such dismissal was cavalier, narcissistic and, indeed, impossible: as the frame-by-frame chronicle of a time that was slipping by us faster than quicksilver, film somehow seemed a step ahead of what was happening in the streets, and in our minds.

Like the time I left a theater in June '68 after seeing the film version of Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*, flicked on the car radio and learned that Bobby Kennedy had just been shot. Or the previous summer, when *Bonnie and Clyde*, a film both celebrated and castigated for its violence, opened against a backdrop of rioting in Newark and Detroit. American cities were burning, American boys were dying in Vietnam, and American film screens were exploding with viscera that was bringing some sort of war home to anyone willing to shell out $1.50 a ticket.

And there were the Academy Awards of April '68, held a week after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., *Bonnie and Clyde*, the filmic Rorschach test of the day, was nominated for ten Oscars; it won two. The big win-

ners that year were safer bets—*In the Heat of the Night* and *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner*, two films about gray-haired, socially empowered white men whose prejudices are demolished by handsome, reasonable Sidney Poitier.

King was dead in Memphis, the nation was burning, but maybe the reverend's dream was holding, even in Hollywood. If Martin Luther King had not been able to deliver the nation to its better angels, maybe polite, civil, well-mannered and well-spoken Sidney Poitier could? At the time, Poitier was Hollywood's all-purpose answer to America's race problem and, the screen, as we surely knew, was the medium which understood us better than we understood ourselves. Except, of course, that our true heroes were not flickering by at 24 frames per second as he showed a Mississippi police chief or a liberal white couple in Manhattan the sad, sad error of their ways. Our real heroes were jousting in the anarchic dark night of America's soul, trying to bring this nation—black and white, rich and poor—to the light. And our heroes were not breathing any more, a finality beyond the scope of films, for their director could always call for another take.

Arthur J. Magida

DESEGREGATION OF SCHOOLS moved slowly through small towns in West Texas. It was fall of 1966 before the black school and the white school were merged in my hometown. My children were in the second, fourth and seventh grades of the white school and I served as a homeroom parent for two of them. In anticipation, we had many discussions about human rights, race discrimination and Martin Luther King, Jr., during that summer.

On the first day of school, I was at the seventh grade room early to help arrange the cookies and Kool-Aid the class mothers had prepared as a special treat. Knowing this day would profoundly alter the lives of every child in the school system, I stood at the door of the school and watched children of both colors arrive. Pride and relief swelled in my heart as the white children tentatively smiled and spoke to the others. There was no ugliness, no meanness, rudeness or disruptive behavior. I watched with gratitude as a big white eighth-grade boy held the door open for a small black girl.

But the pride and appreciation I experienced for our long-known, well-loved students was only a fraction of the respect and admiration I felt for the black newcomers. Clutching their school supplies to their chests, they walked purposefully down the sidewalk in groups of two or three while the parents who brought them waited in their cars. The girls wore Keds canvas shoes with snow-white laces; their dresses were starched and ironed so perfectly they could have stood alone. All hair braids were plaited tightly with colorful barrettes clipped on the ends. The creases in the trouser legs and shirtsleeves the boys wore were knife-sharp. They all smelled cleanly of soap and talcum powder.

Only one seventh-grade student from the black school transferred in that day. Her name was Ruby, and she was assigned the seat behind my daughter. My shy, self-conscious child turned around, smiled at Ruby, and said, "You have a pretty dress." Ruby smiled back and said, "I never saw red hair before."

Pat Capps Mehaffey

WE WERE LIVING IN AN APARTMENT in Memphis at the time. We were 23, married less than two years with an infant daughter, Beth. We weren't in town when it happened. Beth and I had accompanied my husband on a business trip.

Unlike Kennedy's assassination, the news of which reached me as I walked past the men's dorm toward the cafeteria my

sophomore year of college, I'm not sure of the exact moment that I learned of Martin Luther King's death. I was probably in the motel involved in a feeding or diaper change wrapped up as I was in this new life as a young mom.

What I do remember is the curfew we encountered when, returning home to an empty refrigerator, we were unable to go out for food. I remember being concerned for the safety of ourselves and our baby in this justifiably angry city.

Most of all, I remember my shock when, talking to an upstairs neighbor the next day, I learned that not everyone was saddened by the tragedy.

Judy Gill Milford

I WAS ABOUT TWELVE WHEN I first heard about separate facilities for whites and coloreds, as black people were then called. My uncle had been stationed in South Carolina during World War II and shocked the family with tales of life in the South. About the same time I heard a stunning story from a friend. Her father had killed a pedestrian with his automobile while driving in Florida. The attending policeman had dismissed the accident since it involved a non-white victim, and made no effort to charge the driver. As a white child growing up near Boston, I had overheard racial epithets and slurs. I had also been taught by my parents and teachers about fairness and equal rights.

As a young woman in my twenties, I was never aware of active protests. In 1956 my husband and I had not heard of Martin Luther King, and Selma had not happened. Certainly we were not persons expected to take part in a small revolutionary act. White-glove lady-like, my form of complaint was to sign a petition. My Brooklyn-born husband, with his gentle manner, would not be a likely suspect. We were living in Washington, D.C., where he was gathering material for his doctoral dissertation on controlled burning. He worked during the week at the National Archives, and we spent weekends traveling in the South where he interviewed foresters on firefighting practices. On each trip we took time for sightseeing.

It was my first visit to a small Virginia town. I was to meet my husband in a park after he completed his interview. I arrived first and looked about me at two sets of benches, some marked White and others marked Colored. I felt too uncomfortable to sit on either bench. I wanted to complain about this custom but I did not dare. I chose to stand rather than use the benches.

Later, I had my chance to express my feelings. We had just toured Luray Caverns. As we left the caves we spotted two drinking fountains, one labeled White and the other Colored. As soon as we found ourselves alone, my husband switched the signs, placing the White where the Colored had been, and vice versa. We jumped into our car and fled, quaking with fear. No one ever accused us, and I fervently hope no one else was blamed.

Dorothy Schiff Shannon

WE DROVE OUR RED RAMBLER into Atlanta, Georgia, that first summer after we were married. I was learning my own civil rights struggle that summer, a new wife on the raggedy wheel of history.

We arrived barely "older than springtime," green and tender co-leaders of an Interns-in-Industry project sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee. There was fear and future everywhere in the air. My job at Newberry's five and dime was business-as-usual, the white girls waiting table and counter; the black girls cleaning up in the kitchen and bringing the orders as far as invisibility would allow. Black customers sat only at one end of the counter. Our white boss remained suspicious of why I was there. Over-qualified he called me, though I barely knew what I was doing.

At night we went home to Morehouse College, all black except for ourselves. Home. We were welcomed also at Martin Luther King Senior's Ebenezer Baptist Church with its powerful music that had held since slave days all the grief and thanksgiving of a people who are bound together. The chanted sermons were interspersed with the choral murmurings and amens of the listeners. We were held in the wide arms of this congregation. We belonged to them. But they could not yet belong to us.

We participated in little ways in the great conversation that was going on everywhere that summer. And we endured small terrors when one or another of our workshop participants aroused ire or suspicion at his or her work site or when one of the interracial gatherings that we spearheaded or attended crossed the shifting threshold of white domination protected by law and custom.

At the end of that summer I went home with a fury and grief I could not begin to fathom. I did not yet have language for the oppression I felt in those years when the women's movement grew arm-in-arm with the civil rights movement. I had been a co-leader with my husband of the Interns-in-Industry summer program, but frequently I had felt my voice was not wanted or heard. And I watched other women in the program marginalized as well. I felt hatred welling up in me.

Sexism was my intellectual and emotional door into understanding internalized oppression and the need for a fierce promise not to settle for any limits on the freedom of the human spirit, my own or any of my fellow human beings'. I learned that sexism and racism are largely invisible to the historically privileged. By and large, men could not see the subtle ways in which their voices were dominant, mine marginalized. And I watched the ways in which I submitted to this marginalization and did it to myself and other women. What a long way we had to go before we could overcome some day!

Maryhelen Snyder

THE RECENT TRAGIC RACIAL tensions occurring in Jena, Louisiana, reminded me of a similar episode that happened 50 years ago. The earlier event not only involved a local school board, but it ended up involving a governor and the President of the United States. The principle perpetrator in this affair was Orval Faubus, the radical demagogue who played a different role in the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and 1960s. He died a few years ago and probably not many of today's generation will recognize that name or the significance of his passing. In 1957, Faubus, then governor of Arkansas, stood in the doorway of Central High School and proclaimed to a nation and the world that black children were not welcome in the white schools of Little Rock. It would take court orders and federal troops to convince him otherwise. The six-time governor's dramatic stand against Brown v. Board of Education was the first of many such political maneuvers by segregationists in the South. Clenched fists and burning crosses met social change. Faubus symbolized a South from a century past: defiant, unyielding, and proud. It was an era of hate and fear.

Several years ago, while doing research in Arkansas, I happened by chance to meet the former governor. He was sitting in a wooden rocking chair in an anteroom of a Civil War museum. Faubus was tucked away like a dusty relic from a bygone era. The once fiery demagogue, now only a humble shell of his former self, sat greeting the occasional tourist who recognized him. Extremely gaunt and feeble, his hair like wisps of matted cotton, the governor raised a frail and shaky hand to me. Faubus' physical condition indicated he was very ill, but his eyes were alert and still bright with a bit of a twinkle, like those of a thin Kris Kringle.

Once considered a hero by a different generation, Faubus now represented a past that most modern politicians would rather forget.
Hays Traylor

IT WAS OXFORD, OHIO, FOR PETE'S sake, not Oxford, Mississippi. Sure, just across Rte. 27 on the campus of Western College for Women, civil rights groups were training college kids and others from around the country to head south as Freedom Riders, but on our side of the street, the Miami University side of the street, we were thinking about other things: which TriDelts would be serenaded by the Betas, what outrageous prank the Dekes would pull, whether Mary's voice would hold up through the last night of *Brigadoon*, and most importantly—for me—whether I'd make it through finals with high enough grades to secure that junior high teaching job I'd just interviewed for.

So sure, I was shocked and saddened, as they say, by Dr. King's tragic assassination, as they say—as if there were another kind of assassination. I'd respected him and his work and—to the degree that I'd thought about it, which wasn't much, frankly—agreed with his philosophy of nonviolence. I'd never sent him money, though, or carried a sign or in any other way protested the treatment of America's Negroes or anyone else. It wasn't who I was. So his assassination shook me up and began to wake me up—first JFK; now MLK—but finals and my upcoming wedding were what I really needed to be thinking about.

So it wasn't until several weeks later, when I returned home to Cincinnati, a freshly-minted Miami alum, and drove down Reading Rd. to my uncle's used car lot and saw the burned-out buildings and the broken windows and the boarded-up windows and the overturned cars and the looks from those Negroes on the street corners that told me in a way I'd never been told before that I was the enemy that I began to get it. And then I got to the lot and saw that not a window had been broken, not a car had been scratched—because Lonnie and Big John, who'd worked for Uncle Mike and Uncle Ray all those years, had told people in the neighborhood to "leave Mr. Ray's business alone; he takes good care." And I began to get it differently—that we're part of the problem unless we're part of the solution; that it's not just about sending money and carrying signs.

Two years later, in the spring of 1970, three of us young greater Cincinnati teachers signed a petition in support of the Vietnam Moratorium March in Washington and stuck it to the bulletin board in the faculty lounge, assuming that others would sign it, as well. We came back at lunch to find it crumpled into a ball and thrown in the wastebasket, "Mao," "Stalin," and "Castro" added to the list of signers. The civics teacher had done it.
Jonathan Shorr

JUST ONCE I'D LIKE FOR THE MAN, who, as the leader of the civil rights movement made over 2500 public appearances between the years of 1957 and 1968, to be viewed in full dimension. To not have that sound bite interpreted as a dream that was realized by desegregation, and is part of our nation's past.

Perhaps we never hear Dr. King's urgent call for justice played back to us, or hear his desire for the "invigorating autumn of freedom and equality" because we are too afraid to question how far we have come. Perhaps, a real tribute would have to include an evaluation of our current situation. How often since then have the lives of poor people serving in the Armed Forces—poor black people—become dispensable.
Christine Higgins

BLACK MANHATTAN

Inspired by a collage of Romare Bearden

It was hot that summer of '69.
I stared out the window of my heat-trapped
tenement, watched and waited for something,
anything. Neighbors sat isolated in stupor,
too drained to talk. The rhythm of the street
shuffled and brooded. Even the sky sagged.

I couldn't stop thinking of orange that summer,
our orange-colored buildings with no insulation,
no covering for our windows, the fire-orange sun
that fried us like eggplant, the orange "do not enter"
signs that restricted our movement. Orange choked
me like a hand around my neck. When I saw
a mother with her boy, I wondered what comfort
she could possibly give this summer of free-flowing
anger, of tear gas and riots. What good were civil rights?

When I finally noticed the iron scaffolding on the building
across the way, open and airy, its whole body laughing, it
startled me. Clothes swung upside down on a high wire,
waving like a little tune, waving me along, along, saying
Let's go, girl! A hum rose in my throat as orange stretched
to a hint of blue.

Mary Jo Balistreri

VOTING RIGHTS, BUT FIRST MRS. ABERNATHY'S CHICKEN • *Margaret Rozga*

It keeps on moving, like a happy marriage, celebrating anniversaries and important milestones, raising new questions, and facing new issues. The civil rights movement, often identified with and identifying the 1960s, still shapes thought, makes headlines and provides background, serves as a model.

The summer of 2005 finally brought the conviction of Edgar Ray Killens for manslaughter in the 1964 deaths of civil rights worers James Chaney, Michael Schwerner, and Andrew Goodman. The elections of 2000 and 2004 renewed discussions of voting rights and protections. August 2005 marked the fortieth anniversary of President Lyndon Baines Johnson signing into law the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the beginning of debate about renewing sections of this key legislation. For civil rights advocates, it was a major victory. It promised an end to the obstacles imposed upon African Americans who wanted to register to vote. For me this law had, and continues to have, deep personal meaning.

I was a civil rights worker, in the parlance of those who then opposed our work, an outside agitator. Before the Voting Rights Act became law, as a second year student at Alverno College, I volunteered to work in the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Summer Community Organization and Political Education (SCOPE) project. I was assigned to Bullock County, Alabama, where our group of volunteers were to encourage African Americans to register to vote. If we and they faced obstacles, harassment and intimidation, and we did, part of our job was to record all the details and thus build the case for the passage of the Voting Rights Act. We felt then, and I still feel now, pride in and ownership of this law.

SCOPE began in earnest with a week's orientation in Atlanta, long days of studying relevant history and learning tactics and strategies. The atmosphere was intense, given the dangerous business that awaited us, but I enjoyed meeting other volunteers and had the reward of witnessing some unforgettable moments. The last day of orientation provided one of the most memorable.

The SCOPE staff needed time to arrange rides for us. Most of the volunteers did not have their own cars. Hosea Williams, project director, announced that those of us waiting should step outside; we'd see Dr. King there, and King would lead us down the street to Rev. Abernathy's church where Mrs. Abernathy was cooking our lunch.

Irene Arnold and Fannie Lamb, teenage volunteers from Bullock County, and I walked together from the warm, noisy Morris Brown College gym into the fresh, though humid, air outside and hustled into the rag tag line already beginning to move out beyond the green and the sidewalk to the middle of the street. Dr. King and those in the front paused and turned around to make sure the volunteers had picked up their cue and knew to follow. In the lurch

and jostling during the pause, we found ourselves near the front, almost immediately behind Dr. King.

He took off his jacket and draped it on his arm. He wore a short sleeve shirt. Even so, his face was damp with perspiration. So were ours. The 1960s may be remembered as a time of gauzy blouses and bell-bottom jeans, but that was not yet the style in 1965, at least not in the Deep South. We wore cotton shirtwaist dresses with ample skirts and high necklines. We were weighted down with our bags as we had already checked out of the college dorms that had housed us for the week. It was hot. We were tired, anxious, and hungry.

Dr. King began to move again, but he kept turning to look behind him toward the gym. He craned his neck, looking at the stream of people behind. I followed his glance and saw what I thought were a lot of people headed toward Mrs. Abernathy's lunch. The line extended perhaps a half a block behind me, maybe a hundred people, enough so that we needed to be in the street as we were and not up on the sidewalk. Yet this was clearly only a fraction of the volunteers.

Without slowing down at all, Dr. King leaned forward and asked those alongside of him, "How many people did we say?"

I didn't hear who answered or what the answer was. But King replied, "That's what I thought. Look. We don't have that many."

Several of the men with King in front glanced backward. "Oh, well," one of them said.

"Oh, well? Oh, well, nothing. She got up a whole crew. Been cooking all morning. Mrs. Abernathy is going to be mad at me."

We continued without interruption through an intersection where the cross traffic waited at a green light until we had all gone by. We were about to walk under a pedestrian overpass. King looked up, saw people there, slowing, looking at the line of us, perhaps wondering if we were demonstrating about some issue. King called up to them, "Hi. How you doing there? We're going to Rev. Abernathy's church. Mrs. Abernathy's cooking chicken. Y'all come on now and join us."

He turned then to some people on the sidewalk who also looked at us with questioning faces. "Come on along for lunch. Mrs. Abernathy's cooking chicken." And so we continued down the street. "Hey, y'all," and a giant arc of Dr. King's right arm invited in still more spectators. Students, men, women, children on the sidewalks stepped down onto the road and followed this Pied Piper to lunch.

By the time we were at the church, the crowd of people had more than doubled. We sat on metal folding chairs at long tables. Women in white uniforms, women in cotton house dresses, moved in the narrow spaces between tables. The aroma of fresh fried chicken permeated the air. We filled our plates, gasped as the steam escaped when we bit into a drumstick. We swallowed sweet iced tea in large gulps. Mrs. Abernathy's crew saw not only their fried chicken, but their beans, potato salad and cole slaw all disappear. It was the best meal we had all week.

All too soon, it was time to go. Cars and drivers had been lined up for us. We were assigned to Rev. Boone's car and headed off to

Bullock County, happily well-fed, if still apprehensive about the long hot weeks of June, July and August that lay ahead, hoping but not quite trusting the Voting Rights Act would soon be law.

As far as I know, Mrs. Abernathy did not get mad at Dr. King that day. And as for the menu for my celebration of this fortieth anniversary, that's one of the easiest decisions I've ever made. I just wish I had Mrs. Abernathy's recipes and perfect touch. I also hope, but do not quite trust, the provisions of the Voting Rights Act will continue to be law.

IN THE FUNERAL MARCH OF MARTIN LUTHER KING: A VILLANELLE

Atlanta, 9 April 1968

We've been a long time coming to this place—
His grave, long dug, echoes an ancient noise—
His blood is hid in wounds deep in his race.

Our forebears used kind reason to efface
Evil, muffle chains. With silence that destroys,
We've been a long time coming to this place.

Laws were ropes time loosed from necks to lace
Long loops of smiles that still hold men as boys.
His blood is hid in wounds deep in his race.

Heart taught our march to the pulse of its beating pace;
Our trail unwinds from wailing—sings out joys.
We've been a long time coming to this place.

Years bled wrongs; thickened; gathered to one face
Who named the nameless, bred their cries to voice.
His blood is hid in wounds deep in his race.

From dust rose man: from dust men trampled raise
Breath to build a dream beyond all death. Rejoice!
We've been a long time coming to this place.
His wound is hid in blood deep in his race.

Ewing Everett Carruthers

Give me, for my life,
all lives,
give me all the pain
of everyone,
I'm going to turn it into hope.

Pablo Neruda

“We have flown the air like birds and swum the sea like fishes, but have yet to learn the simple act of walking the earth like brothers.”

Martin Luther King, Jr.

Martin Luther King issue

passager