

4-6-68
NYT

Negroes Strive to Ease Tensions; False Rumors Raise City's Fears

Militants Join Effort

By THOMAS A. JOHNSON

At the height of the violence in Harlem early yesterday morning, about 30 young Negro militants fanned out from Jay's Bar and Grill on 125th Street near Eighth Avenue and tried to persuade other Negroes to stop breaking windows, looting and setting fires.

This particular group was made up of members of Harlem CORE, and they were only a part of the many hundreds of Negroes living in the violence-torn areas of Harlem and Brooklyn who worked actively to stop the disorders.

The volunteer peace-keepers tried to end the violence by a variety of methods and for a variety of reasons.

Some are church groups,

Continued on Page 26, Column 1

Racial Unrest Exaggerated

By MURRAY SCHUMACH

The city was flooded yesterday with wild and unfounded rumors that exceeded the amount of violence and heightened widespread fears of racial riots.

In some instances, the reports became so persistent that corporations allowed employees, particularly women, to leave for home early in the afternoon.

The untrue reports included subway disruptions, bombings, mass assaults and imposition of a citywide curfew. Almost any kind of holdup, apparently, was associated in the minds of some rumor-mongers with racial disturbances and was then exaggerated.

Barry H. Gottehrer, the head

Continued on Page 26, Column 6

MILITANTS JOIN IN PEACE-KEEPING

They 'Hold No Love for
Nonviolence,' but Oppose
Endangering Negroes

Continued From Page 1, Col. 5

imbued with philosophies close to the concepts of nonviolence of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., whose assassination in Memphis on Thursday led to the series of outbursts.

Others, like the Harlem chapter of the Congress of Racial Equality, say Negroes should not fight policemen when the odds are heavily in favor of the police.

Vic Solomon, chairman of the CORE group, said: "We hold no love for nonviolence — it is a philosophy that was bankrupt a long time ago. We simply don't believe in having black people slaughtered — going up against armed policemen with their bare hands just because they're angry. Before we go to war we should know we are fighting from a position of strength, not weakness."

The falling temperature, which by 1 A.M. today was down to 35, was also a factor in keeping Harlem relatively quiet. A chill wind had driven most persons indoors by midnight.

Harlem CORE youths, their collars turned up against the cold, worked through the night trying to persuade people to go home, and avoid trouble.

Among those who tried to calm tensions during the day was Manhattan Borough President Percy Sutton. During a day-long talkathon with Negroes and whites over radio station WLIB, he appealed for racial peace.

When a white woman telephoned WLIB, which is based in Harlem, and said she would like to kill the slayer of Dr. King, Mr. Sutton replied:

"I don't think that would please the Prince of Peace. Violence begets violence, so we should have no violence."

King's Philosophy Stressed

He reminded the listeners, about a third of whom are white, according to station officials, that Dr. King was "an advocate that all people of all backgrounds could live in peace together."

Jeff Greenup, president of

the Manhattan branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, has led nine male members on walking tours through Harlem since Dr. King's assassination, preaching calm on the streets.

N.A.A.C.P. members were on the streets of Harlem, Mr. Greenup said, "from river to river," and along the teeming Brooklyn streets all Thursday night.

More than 200 teenage youths from Haryou's Harlem Youth Unlimited and the Haryou Cadet Corps have also walked the streets, talking to people, during the disorders.

The five offices of Haryou's Neighborhood boards, a block-by-block organization of Harlem residents, remained open all night as clearinghouses and aid stations for victims of numerous fires set in Harlem.

Clergymen Issue Appeal

And an appeal by Protestant clergymen and "concerned citizens" was circulated throughout Harlem yesterday urging adults to use restraint and to set an example for youths to help reduce tensions.

The appeal grew out of a meeting of ministers and citizens at the St. Paul Baptist Church in Harlem, which is active with the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. The conference, based in Atlanta, Ga., had been headed by Dr. King.

In answer to a plea by police Lieut. Calvin Boxley of the Sixth Division, that "we need more people in the street to calm people down," a citizens' group associated with the Abyssinian Baptist Church sent both foot and car patrols through the Harlem area. The citizens' group is headed by Odell Clark, an aide to Adam Clayton Powell.

During a meeting yesterday at the Alfred E. Isaacs Democratic Club, Seventh Avenue and 145th Street, two black nationalist militants, Charles Kenyatta and Mrs. Audley (Queen Mother) Moore, volunteered to man sound trucks.

Mr. Kenyatta, the leader of a para-military group called the Mau Maus, said: "We can get those kids to move but they are looking for some direction."

Recordings by Dr. King were used to help calm feelings along Harlem's 125th Street, Brooklyn's Fulton Street and at other locations. Record stores broadcast his speeches all day yesterday as crowds of Negroes listened on the sidewalks.

Outside a Harlem record store, after the voice of Dr.

King declared that (in 1963) Negroes could not vote in Mississippi and felt they had nothing to vote for in New York, a heavy-set Negro man, declared:

One prominent Harlem professional man, who asked not to be identified, said he could not in good conscience help to keep Harlem tempers cooled.

"Whites say it was just one white man who shot Dr. King," he said. "Hell, it was just one white man who shot Medgar Evers, and one white man who

bombed that church in Birmingham—why is it that only Negroes are asked to be more Christian than anybody else?"

Negro groups and individuals were also active in trying to end the disorders that rocked the Harlem and Bedford-Stuyvesant communities during the summer of 1964.

The Harlem chapter of CORE was in the forefront at that time. Four years ago, however, the chapter was still promoting a nonviolent concept and about half its members were white.

CORE youths who walked the streets at the time — some carrying first aid packets to administer to injured Negroes — were advocates of nonviolence as a tactic for gaining civil rights.

The disorders in Harlem and Brooklyn Thursday night never reached the intensity of the outbursts of four years ago.

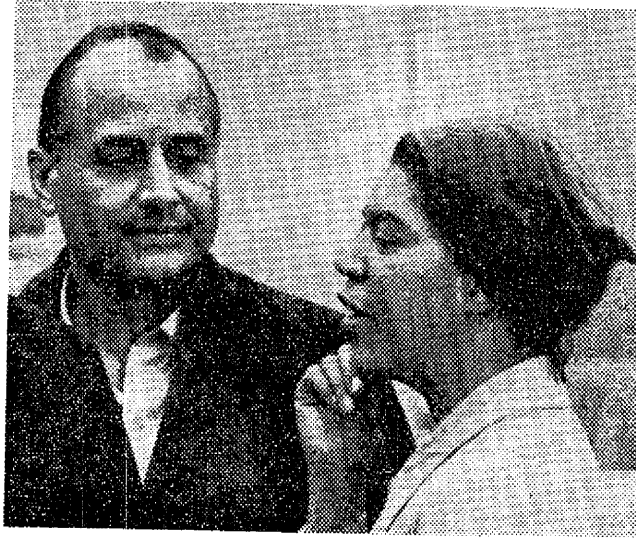
The pattern in Harlem four years ago was primarily that of

Negroes clashing with policemen on the hot, muggy streets. But there was not nearly as much looting in Harlem four years ago as on Thursday night.

There was considerable looting during the Brooklyn disorders in 1964 that followed the Harlem violence by a few days and the pattern of citizens fighting policemen on the streets continued in Brooklyn.

Stamp for Dr. King Is Urged

WASHINGTON, April 5 (AP) — A commemorative stamp to honor the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was suggested today by Representative George E. Brown Jr., Democrat of California. He said that "stamps have been issued in the past shortly after the deaths of other great leaders such as John F. Kennedy and Adlai Stevenson," and that Dr. King certainly falls into the category of persons deserving of this honor."



The New York Times

BOROUGH PRESIDENT IN HARLEM: Percy E. Sutton, Borough President of Manhattan, talking with woman he met during tour of Harlem. He and other city officials went to the area to counsel calm after the slaying of Dr. King.

Wild Rumors of Racial Violence Flood City and Increase Fears

Continued From Page 1, Col. 6

of the city's Urban Action Task Force, said his office was "deluged with calls, most of them from nuts." He observed that in periods of tension, untrue and exaggerated reports were always circulated.

The danger of circulating unfounded rumors was noted by the United States Riot Commission Report, published last month, which said of the riots of 1967:

"Rumors significantly aggravated tension and disorder in more than 65 per cent of the disorders studied by the commission. Sometimes, as in Tampa and New Haven, rumor served as the spark which turned an incident into a civil disorder. Elsewhere, notably in Detroit and Newark, even where they were not precipitating or motivating factors, inflaming rumors made the job of police and community leaders far more difficult."

Among the untrue rumors that were being widely circulated yesterday in offices, in calls to the police and newspapers and on the street were the following:

¶Subways were not running into Harlem. Riots were taking place in subways. A bomb had been placed somewhere along the Eighth Avenue subway line of the IND. The 68th Street station of the Lexington section of the IRT had been closed down.

¶A horde of Negroes had invaded the Flatbush section of Brooklyn and was stabbing white persons.

¶A Negro boy was shot to death in the Williamsburgh section of Brooklyn.

¶"All hell is breaking loose in Jersey City and they are bombing buses."

¶Many reports of persons robbed in the streets.

In some cases, rumor and misunderstanding grossly distorted an element of truth into untruth.

Thus, in Freeport High School, Freeport, L. I., an announcement was made that school would be let out early in tribute to the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the Negro

spokesman for nonviolence, who was assassinated in Memphis on Thursday.

Somehow, this was construed to mean, by some students, that they would have to remain at school. A chair was thrown through a window by a Negro student and a flag was burned.

To arrest the spread of this misunderstanding, students were assembled in the auditorium and were told they would be permitted to leave early out of respect to the Negro leader. There was no more trouble.

Police Are Diverted

Some of the rumors diverted the police to wasted projects of investigation. One of these was a series of telephoned reports that a bomb had been planted in the New York Stock Exchange. The police search went on during trading hours, but nothing was found.

One official, while conceding there were no ulterior motives among those circulating the rumors, pointed out that professional revolutionaries had advocated this technique during periods of stress to tie up the police.

As the number of unfounded rumors multiplied during the day, Mr. Gottehrer instructed his employes not to discuss reports until they had been checked out.

His office has its own network for checking out rumors. It sets up a unit in each of the troubled areas, and part of its work is investigating reports of this sort. Since this office works constantly in slum areas, its employes have contacts with community leaders as well as with the police.

The impact of rumors on children was illustrated by the case of Edward Jones, who is in the first class at Public School 113, at 113th Street, off Lenox Avenue, in Harlem. He told his teacher, Miss Kathleen Sullivan, he wanted to write a story. He wrote this:

"We better not go out of our houses tonight. If we do, we'll get shot. They're coming to our block tonight. They are going to tear the block up."