

MONTGOMERY TO MEMPHIS

The assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., ~~at six o'clock on April 4, 1968,~~
was the most costly crime in history.

unprecedented

It was followed by an eruption of violence when the blacks who so loved ~~this~~
their young, charismatic leader, their second black Nobel laureate, vented generations
of accumulated and stifling frustrations in a firestorm of rage. By the time their
passions had spent themselves the rotting hearts of dozens of major cities were
afame. The gutted hulks of many ghettos and the stark, roofless walls of many
business properties the owners of which had exploited poor blacks for years/^{still} remain
as acres of ugly monuments to the years of exploitation of blacks and the inchoate
black rage pent up for so long.

The nation talked about making amends. Presidents, sensing photo opportunities and
political advantage, toured the devastated areas and promised the glorious rebuilding
on those ashes but the ashes remain and the rebuilding has not begun.

King has gone to Memphis, Tennessee, a rotting, river town on the muddy Mississippi
where Tennessee and Mississippi meet across from Arkansas, to lend his support to striking
sanitation workers, mostly black and all underpaid, the blacks more underpaid than the
few whites employed in similar jobs. He was standing on the balcony of the second
newer wing of the partly
floor of the run-down black owned and tenanted Lorraine Motel, just before dark settled
after a sleepless night
down on along day of fighting a federal injunction against a planned protest march. He
had changed his clothes and was about to leave for dinner at the home of a black Memphis
minister, ~~the~~ Rev. Samuel B. Kyles. He was ~~going~~ joshing and talking with friends and
associates standing in the parking lot below while his longtime friend and associate,
Rev. Ralph David Abernathy, was completing dressing. After about five minutes of the
banter, after King had asked for the singing of a favorite piece at that night's
scheduled event, Solomon Jones, the chauffeur ~~of~~ for a black funeral home that had
lent him and a Cadillac for driving ^{around}, suggested that King take an overcoat
to protect him against the evening's chill, King started to ~~rise from the~~

straighten himself up. He had been bent over the railing, looking at and kidding with those below. Kyles had taken about five steps toward the stairs that led to his car in the parking lot below when there was a ^{single} ~~single~~ loud report. A single shot caught the still bent over King in ~~the~~ his right jaw. The single .30-06, hunting-type rifle bullet exploded on impact. Part of it erupted out again below the collar, blasting his tie apart and making an even larger hole than was caused by the explosive impact. The remnant of bullet, the butt end of it, tore through King's spinal column before all the deadly energy was expended and it stopped under King's left shoulderblade, so close to the surface of the skin it was visible.