

RESPONDENT: Carrie Carter April 30, 1968
INTERVIEWER: Robert Bechtel, Ph.D.

TAPED INTERVIEW

- R.B. Oaky, lets see if I'm set up here. Okay, now what is your name?
- C.C. My name is Carrie Carter
- R.B. Carrie which
- C.C. Carrie Car - ter
- R.B. Carter, I see- Carrie Carter, okay, lets pick it up right from there, okay, Carrie, now, take it from the time, lets see, that was April the 8th on Tuesday, lets take it from that time on and you tell me- when did you first hear about the riots
- C.C. Uhh, I heard about the riots here at work, I believe that was -
- R.B. Now, you're a card punch - a key punch operator?
- C.C. Yes, and I heard through Marilyn that they were letting all the kids out of school because - I heard that they were rioting and I couldn't understand why, you know. The next thing I know- we were all let out to go home you know, so I went home and I didn't see anything unusual in my neighborhood at the time. I did notice that everybody was riding around in cars, (how can I say that was unusual?) there was a lot of honking, you know, just bumper to bumper and I couldn't understand what was going on. The first night it wasn't too bad, I believe that was on that Monday and then Tuesday night- the location where I live was 2508 East 30th, right off from 30th and Prospect and everyone started gathering -
- R.B. Now, is that a single house or ?
- C.C. It's an apartment building, I live on the first floor and I noticed everybody was coming and parking right by United Super, they were all gathering there, and I said why, I still didn't see no reason, why, why was it , then the excuse was because of Martin Luther King's assassination. To me it wasn't no excuse.

- R.B. Now you say they were gathered by the Super Market, what were they doing?
- C.C. Just gathering up by car loads, there were rumors that this was to be the said place, the said location where everyone was to gather and to talk things- to talk about the things they were going to do
- R.B. Now, who was to gather there, everybody? all the citizens?
- C.C. Yeah, just people, there aren't any certain individuals that I can point out, or say who was leading this, I never did notice -
- R.B. Well how did you hear about it?
- C.C. Because I live right there, it's not the idea of hearing about it
- R.B. Did you hear about it from a neighbor, did somebody come in and say, you know, face to face
- C.C. Yeah, the people are supposed to be gathering up here, you know
- R.B. From your next door neighbor
- C.C. Just someone in the neighborhood, thats all
- R.B. You see, what I want to know, I want to get some understanding of how the information spreads
- C.C. I really don't know, I heard first they were down in the Park at 16th and Paseo and the next thing I knew, everybody was coming up to 30th and Prospect, out South to 30th and Prospect. Until the police told the people, you know, to disperse and go on home and everybody --
- R.B. About what time was this?
- C.C. This was in the evening
- R.B. This was the second day
- C.C. Yeah this was the second day , I believe Wednesday is when everything did occur, riots, yeah, that Tuesday evening I believe they broke out windows, in fact, I know, because I sat on my porch and watched them break out the windows in the Cook Paint Company right diagonally across from where I live and in the LaundryMat, which you can see right through the the- parking lot

R.B. How did they go about breaking them out, they just walk up to them or run by ?

C.C. Just walk up to them or either some would come by in cars and get out of the cars. I did see some people get out of cars and they just took a brick and broke the windows out , took mirrows out and just broke them up and tried to set fire to the back door and every time it went out, you know and this boy tried to break out a window in the LaundryMat and the police shot at him you know, three times

R.B. Did they hit him?

C.C. No they didn't, he was running like a jack rabbit. It scared me so bad. And this occured all night, all night long, breaking and looting all Tuesday night Then Wednesday night to me it was horrible. About around 6 o'clock in the evening, all the people started gathering again and the crowds and just so many people, and the police wanted them to disperse and they wouldn't disperse, and they were shouting obscenities and I knew they was throwing tear gas on them because I was sitting on my porch drinking beer and they threw tear gas bombs

R.B. Now your porch faces on what ? Prospect?

C.C. 30th, directly on 30th Street

R.B. But you can see Prospect from you porch?

C.C. Ummhumm, directly you can see right on Prospect, directly and as soon as they started throwing tear gas bombs, and they blew up on the porch and about IO guys, I mean, they really threw it on them and we let them in and washed their eyes out and everything. About a half hour later --I don't know exactly when the shooting started all I know is - the police were in the parking lot and it seemed to me that the shcoting was coming from the east side of Prospect, right off from 30th, going toward Montgall and they were shooting at Police, and they had them pinned down to where I could see it and I was so

- C.C. scared, I was scared I was going to get shot, bullets were hitting our building, see, and everybody got on the floor.
- R.B. Did you have bullet holes in your building?
- C.C. I'm not sure, but I know they were hitting, I know some hit the building against the brick, on the side by the parking lot and they had them pinned down for quite a while, all three of them.
- R.B. Now, how did you watch this
- C.C. Through the window
- R.B. Through a window
- C.C. Yes, through a bed room window, at this time I was in the apartment next door to me, because I was scared, and we stood right in the bedroom window and saw a National Guardsman get shot, now who shot him, I don't know. He fell first and then this colored guy - right in front of the Byron Hotel, I don't remember if he was running or what he was doing--
- R.B. Bartram Hotel?
- C.C. Byron, Byron Hotel
- R.B. Oh, the Byron
- C.C. And he was shot once, I believe he was shot in the leg and I think he grabbed his leg and then I believe, two more times he was shot. It was the worse thing I ever saw, I'm not kidding you, seeing somebody get shot down like that. At the time, I didn't know he was dead, but then I decided within myself- he must be dead, cause he didn't move, you know. Then they went over there and to check on the wounded National Guardsman or policeman, whichever it was and they sent an ambulance for him, but the colored guy, they just dragged his body, you know, on up the street, I said, well, why don't they cover him up or something, the man is dead, give him that much respect, you know, and they dragged him up, maybe one or two feet and then
- R.B. Who was dragging him, the police?

C.C. Yes

R.B. Now, did the National Guardsman take care of the National Guardsman and the police took care of the colored man that was shot?

C.C. Unn huh, Eventually, it was some time before his body was taken away from there. Then they threw these tear gas bombs in the Byron Hotel because I heard it said that shots were coming from the hotel and I did see them throw one right through the front door.

R.B. Un hunn, Now, They say the shots were coming from the hotel, now, do you have any idea if the shots were coming from the 1st floor, 2nd, 3rd floor

C.C. No, they were coming from up Prospect right off of Montgall, coming from that direction, From the way the police were shooting back toward this direction, lets see, thats Prospect running North and South

R.B. Did you notice whether the police were shooting up or were they shooting straight

C.C. I didn't really notice, I was looking until I heard a shot, then you close your eyes, you're scared, you know. All I could see, you know, I could see them coming in our building, this is what I was thinking of, and you know, shooting in there and they were all right there, all in front of our apartment building, right directly in fron of it. They were sitting on the ground, they were in the parking lot of United Super, all along Propsect, just hundreds of them, just car loads of them, to me

R.B. Well,after the shot, then what happened?

C.C. Then, they started, just like I said, then they started throwing tear gas bombs into the Byron Hotel, because they said shots were coming from there, I couldn't really tell you if they were, and they told everybody you know, that you had to turn your light out and they shot out all the lights in the parking lot, they shot them all out, it was a complete black-out.

- C.C. I know in that whole square block, all the way down from Prospect to 29th, 29th to Wabash, Wabash to 30th and back to Prospect, a complete blackout and they were telling everyone - some fools were on the street, they didn't have no business out there with their lights on, and they were telling them to turn their light off and if they wouldn't they would help them, search them, make them get on the ground and search them and then they would let them go on their way, you know.
- R.B. Well, what happened the rest of the night, then?
- C.C. All night long there was vigilance, and like I say, there was a blackout, you couldn't have any lights on, they didn't want any light on, and people were steady trying to loot, you know, they were still trying to get out on the streets, even after this occurred, which was stupid.
- R.B. Um humm
- C.C. And I guess all the rest of the night, it was pretty peaceful, except for people driving along the street, which they didn't have any business doing.
- R.B. What time did you get to bed that night?
- C.C. Ohh, about 2 o'clock in the morning - I was scared thats all.
- R.B. Did you hear a lot of noise?
- C.C. No, not after the shooting.
- R.B. After the shooting, things quieted down.
- C.C. Quited down totally, they really did, I understand that a father and son was shot, lives right up the street.
- R.B. Right at the Byron Hotel.
- C.C. No, they were shot at 30th and - they were crossing at 30th and Prospect, they were going home, but I can't understand, the way I read in the paper that every person that got shot was shot in the head, you know.

- C.C. So to me, it was a shoot to kill thing, is the way it was. I felt so bad because of the little boy and his father, you know.
- R. B. What about, okay, the rest of the night things kind of quieted down, but now, some people were trying to loot, weren't they?
- C.C. Yes, and the next night, this little liquor store right on 29th and Prospect, I think called Red's Liquor Store. They had been looting it all day and United Super Market early that morning, and so I went over to look, to see, you know, how they were doing it, and it's a alley that goes in the back of all those little stores on that side of Prospect, and I was saying to myself, now, how could they get in there and get out, because theres a high wall all the way to the back. The further back you go, the higher the wall gets, so I was standing there, with my girlfriend and all of a sudden the policeman jumped out and he swung his stick at me, I could feel the wind just go by me like that, you know, like if I was this much closer he would have knocked my head off. And he said, get the hell away from here, you know, and I couldn't move because I was so scared, I think he thought I was waiting for someone to come out of the store, because he pulled his gun and he rushed back there and kicked the door open and he said, get the hell away from here, like that - and he didn't have to tell me no more, cause I flew, I was scared, thats about the only thing because that Friday, I believe it was that Friday, I left from that location and went out south to stay because I didn't know what was going to occur the next night, and it was peaceful the rest of the week
- R.B. You didn't know what was going to happen the next night
- C.C. No, I didn't know
- R.B. Well, did people, did they ever warn you, did they ever say, well, it's going to be bad tonight?
- C.C. No, not to me, because I don't fool with people like that. Some of my friends we would argue about it, well whats the reason, what are they getting out

- C.C. of it, you know
- R.B. Well, what about the kinds of people that did this sort of thing, did you know any people, I mean, I don't want you to think that this is an investigation, or that you know any people, or that I would say anything, because it's just the opposite, you know, everything that we say here is just as sacrosanct as anything that goes on up there with a psychiatrist- and you know, no information gets out of here like that.
- C.C. Um humm
- R.B. Did you know any of the people?
- C.C. Yes, I know quite a few people
- R.B. Why do you think that they did this kind of thing?
- C.C. Because, to me because of what happened in Chicago, Baltimore and Watts and California, and they said, well finally it got to Kansas City, all it was was for the loot, to steal and get what they could get, thats the only reason, thats the only reason I could see, is to get what they could get
- R.B. They thought - here was an opportunity to get some goods and so - why not do it
- C.C. They would get them and they would sell them or enjoy them themselves
- R.B. Now, the market ought to be pretty flooded for stolen goods now, shouldn't it
- C.C. I really don't know
- R.B. I just wondered how they make out, with everybody having everything whether they'd be able to seel it now
- C.C. Well, what did this do now- you didn't go to work from when
- C.C. From Easter Sunday up till now
- R.B. And what was the consequences of that?
- C.C. Nothing

C.C. It didn't have anything to do with the riot. The people I work with are the finest people you could have- Frances, Melvin, Marilyn and Kay- I wouldn't want anybody else to work with. I'm crazy about him, That's the supervisor. You couldn't have anybody better, No One. Because, I called him and told him how things were going out there, and all they thought about was my safety and that made me feel so well, you know, and even some of my friends, well - my so-called friends I might say associates said some things like I was a white-lover but me, I've never known prejudice, I've gone to school, colored and white I'm not going to say I'm in love with them, but it's the world - you have to get along with them, you got to

R.B. Did any of them try to give you any static on account of that?

C.C. Yeah, I may have heard some things like, you know, when my sister said, when something else happens, I'd better go and sit on the white side, you know, I said, I'm not sitting anywhere, I'm an American Negro and very proud to be one, you know

R.B. Now, who is it said this to you

C.C. Just some people

R.B. Men

C.C. Yeah, men, no girls just men

R.B. They never did anything about it

C.C. No, I wasn't even worried about it. Because --

R.B. Are you still living at the same place?

C.C. Yes, right now, but I'm getting ready to move, I'm not moving because of that, I'm moving because the woman -- well, the rent's too high

R.B. What I'm interested in is what affect- whether the riot had any on

R. B. your job or anything -

C.C. No, no it didn't, not on me or my job, and nothing in my personal life

R.B. How about some of the other people around you

C.C. No, Everybody is living very much as they did before

R.B. Did any of the people need help

C.C. No, not right there where I live, there weren't any people burned out or naything, none of their property destroyed or anything

R.B. There weren't many residences at all burned, were there?

C.C. No, just, most of them were burned along 31st Street off of Benton Benton and to Indiana . I understand they called themselves destroying the businesses owned by white people - but to me, they didn't care, a lot of the places, there were people who lived upstairs, colored people, you know, and all their property was destroyed, you know, all the household goods and

R.B. Yeah

C.C. I still say, nobody up till today, can explain to me why, why it happened The many times that I've asked for information. They say, what the white man has is what we want, and I say, you can't get it by force, you can't, you never can, you just can't, you can never get it by force.

R.B. Yeah, let me see, what else, anything else you can think of, any other incidents

C.C. No, not that I can say that I really was part of

R. B. What do you think about the climate of the neighborhood now that this is over, do you think people are more at ^{ease} or do you think people are less at ease

C.C. I think they are really more at ease, I think after the curfew, they kind of came to their senses because most Negro people - the curfew happened

- C.C. to occur during the week end, and mostly every night it was warm and when it's warm, Negroes like to get out, I know, I'm one - and you know, get out and go to the bars and things and when they saw that they couldn't go to the recreational places that they had been going to, I think some of them came to their senses, you know, and we can't do anything, we can't do anything else but to wait it out and do what you were asked, just do like the curfew said and wait until the next day. Because I thought Easter Sunday, they were going to have it on and I sure didn't want that. And I guess thats all that I can tell you of what happened and also what I saw myself
- R.B. What do the people that you know thinks going to happen in the future, do they think theres going to be another riot?
- C.C. I heard some of them say that it's not over yet, I have heard that through rumors
- R.B. Do you think thats true or just talk
- C.C. Some of them I think are just talking, they are individuals, I haven't heard a whole group of people say, well, it's not over yet, everybody seems to be enjoying like again, you know
- R.B. Did you hear anything about a great number of Negro women going downtown, I guess it was either Friday or Saturday to the stores, did you hear anything about that?
- C.C. No I didn't
- R. B. Did you go down to the stores yourself?
- C.C. No, I didn't, I haven't heard anything about that
- R.B. I don't know even if it's true or not, thats just one of the things I've heard
- C.C. I was downtown Saturday, but I hadn't heard anything like that
- R.B. Do you usually go downtown Saturday?

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C.C.

Um humm, I usually just go down and window shop, I just like to ride down and look around

R.B.

Well, okay Carrie, I appreciate very much your telling me this I have hundreds and hundreds of them to listen to

C.C.

Thats about all, thats all I can see, thats my viewpoint

R.B.

Okay, well thank you very much