



**Smithsonian Institution**

*National Museum of African American History and Culture*

## **Pamphlet: At the Funeral of Medgar Evers in Jackson, Mississippi: A Tribute in Tears and a Thrust for Freedom**

Extracted on Apr-19-2024 06:04:28

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rule must remain inviolate.

"The opposition has been reduced to clubs, guns, hoses, dogs, garbage trucks and hog wire compounds.

Obviously the opposition is nearing bankruptcy. Fresh material is in short supply and strategy is stale and ineffective. Obviously, nothing can stop the drive for freedom. It will not cease here or elsewhere. After a hundred years of waiting and suffering, we are determined, in Baldwin language, "not upon a bigger cage, but upon no cage at all."

"Medgar Evers was the symbol of our victory and of their defeat. Contrary to the view of a Jackson city official, Medgar was more than just an opponent. In life he was a constant threat to the system, particularly in his great voter registration work. In the manner of his death he was the victor over it.

"The bullet that tore away his life four days ago tore away at the system and helped to signal its end.

"They can fiddle and they can throw a few more victims to the lions of repression and persecution, but Rome is burning and a new day is just over yonder."

Wilkins speech concluded the funeral services which lasted less than an hour. Then the great crowd of mourners calmly flowed through the single exit of the big hall onto Lynch Street. There, joined by several thousand other Negroes and some two score of white crusaders against racist persecution, a funeral cortege shaped-up. With his stoic, infinitely brave and undauntable widow in line and alone, a few paces behind the white hearse bearing the remains of Medgar Evers, a vast army of freedom fighter veterans fell in formation, four abreast to wend their way, in a twenty-block-long column throughout the length of Jackson, in a mile and a half silent march.

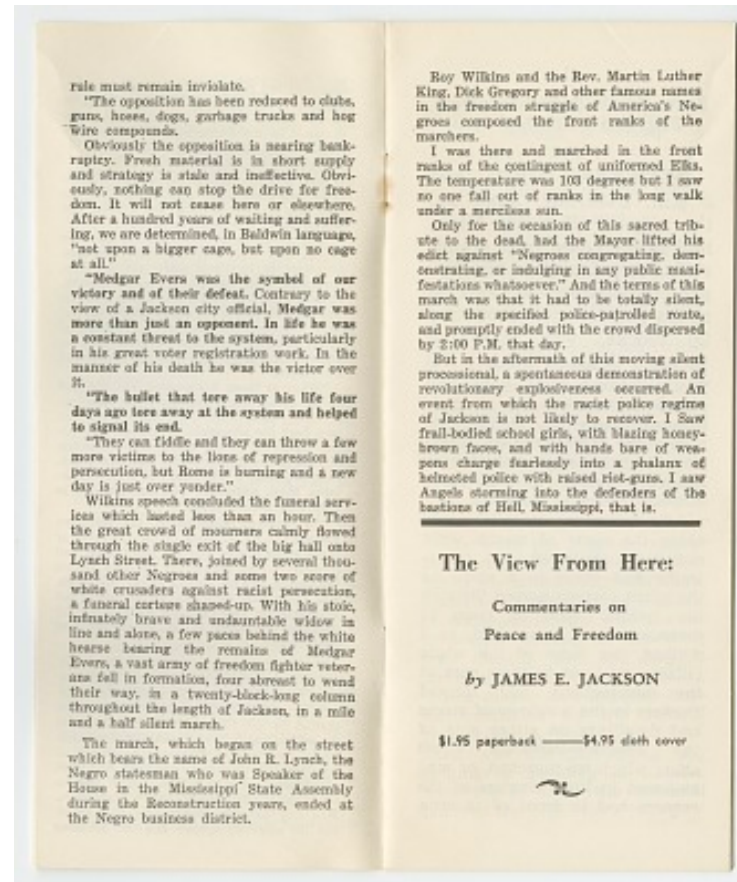
The march, which began on the street which bears the name of John R. Lynch, the Negro statesman who was Speaker of the House in the Mississippi State Assembly during the Reconstruction years, ended at the Negro business district.

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Roy Wilkins and the Rev. Martin Luther King, Dick Gregory and other famous names in the freedom struggle of America's Negroes composed the front ranks of the marchers.

I was there and marched in the front ranks of the contingent of uniformed Elks. The temperature was 103 degrees but I saw no one fall out of ranks in the long walk under a merciless sun.

Only for the occasion of this sacred tribute to the dead, had the Mayor lifted his edict against "Negroes congregating, demonstrating, on indulging in any public manifestations whatsoever." And the terms of this march was that it had to be totally silent, along the specified police-patrolled route, and promptly ended with the crowd dispersed by 2:00



P.M. that day.

But in the aftermath of this moving silent processional, a spontaneous demonstration of revolutionary explosiveness occurred. An event from which the racist police regime of Jackson is not likely to recover. I saw frail-bodied school girls, with blazing honey-brown faces, and with hands bare of weapons charge fearlessly into a phalanx of helmeted police with raised riot-guns. I saw Angels storming into the defenders of the bastions of Hell, Mississippi, that is.

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