

Clara Ester Background Information and Interview Transcript from Lester Holt, NBC Interview

Holt, L. (Reporter). 2018, April 4. Martin Luther King Jr. Assassination Witness Speaks Out 50 Years Later. [Television series episode]. NBC Nightly News. Retrieved from <https://archives.nbclearn.com/portal/site/k-12/browse/?cuecard=114988>

As a college student in Memphis, Clara Ester was following the sanitation workers' strike that had brought the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. to town in April 1968. Clara's presence is noted in the FBI's report. The still photos of that evening capture only partial images of her.

She was with some of his associates outside the Lorraine Motel, walking to a diner to have some catfish, when she heard the gunshot that ended his life.

The below is an excerpt from Clara Ester's interview with Lester Holt which aired on NBC in April 2018.

"I'm standing there looking up at this great giant in my life. And what sounded like a truck backfiring. But I never took my eyes off of him. I heard somebody say get down, get down. I can't tell you how my little feet got up to that balcony. But I remember stepping over his body to where the wound was. I checked for a pulse which was just literally no beat at all. He had the most pleasant expression on his face. His eyes were open. And, you know, the night before he had seen the mountaintop."

During her interview she quoted Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. from his final speech the previous night. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "And I've seen the Promised Land. I may not get there with you. But I want you to know tonight that we as a people will get to the Promised Land."

"And that was all that was playing over in my head. I may not get there with you. I may not get there with you. Our King had been taken away. But amazingly, and we talk about that dream, his dream is our dream."