Mary Upshaw McClendon worked as a household technician and has been founder and president of several organizations. The Household Workers Organization was founded in 1969 for the purpose of upgrading skills and wages of household technicians and those in related fields of employment. She has received numerous awards, including being placed on the Silver Scroll for the 25th Anniversary of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights.

CRIME AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Winston Lang:
You will hear it said very often that things are very different today than they were. We used to leave our doors unlocked. We used to sleep out on the front porch in the summertime because you didn't have air conditioning in the houses, and you wouldn't be afraid to sleep out on the front porch.

There was very little in the way of muggings. But I do recall my sister's Easter dress being snatched from my brother's hands as we walked back from the seamstresses picking them up. Two fellows came out of the alley and snatched them. I don't know if they knew what was in the package or not.

Those kind of things were few and far between in reference to the Black community. I'd be somewhat skeptical as far as news coverage of crime in the Black community, largely because the policeman's word was law, and whatever he said happened. Whatever a police officer said happened against a Black person, that was law.

Frances Quock:
We had a saying that they shoot first and ask questions later.

Winston Lang:
In terms of crime, I guess the biggest crime going on on a regular basis in the Black community, which most people didn't view as crime, was the numbers. We used to have policy as well as the regular numbers. The regular numbers sort of resembled the lottery of today. Policy, I guess you could play one number at a time. They paid off, to my understanding, a lot better than the lottery paid off. I think you got $5.00 per penny.

Mary McClendon:
In a single action people would be moving. They'd get their pay and zip, be gone, Until the next one come. They paid off right there.

Winston Lang:
That was against the law, and you might call it criminal, but it was an accepted kind of thing in the Black neighborhood. I never found anybody who would turn a numbers person in. Everybody knew who the number man was. Everybody gave the number man respect like they gave any other business person respect.

Mary McClendon:
Another thing is that the police weren't so holy. If they should happen to catch you, you'd have to pay them off. When we were living on Raphael, right off of Russell, we'd see them get this pick-up man. They picked him up and put him in the car and drove him around. "We can't get any today. They done took Steve." After awhile Steve would come back down the street whistling. Steve said, "I had to pay them off."

Frances Quock:
My mother won enough money to pay down on this house. Later on, when things were getting very tight for her, she rented the basement out. This is where the numbers men were. Then the police would come and collect there. So it's true about the policemen collecting their monthly bribe. That was at 93 Adelaide between John R and Woodward. The house is still there. In fact Danny Thomas lived here before my mother purchased it. There is a church, St. Patrick's, across the street where he went to pray that if he became popular, famous, he would establish the St. Jude Hospital.

Mary McClendon:
Also, during the numbers game, when police were hot on their trail, they would move from house to house as their headquarters. If they didn't have enough money to put in their own phone, you couldn't use your phone because that was their phone up until they'd leave.

They'd give you X number of dollars per week to let them operate from your house. If they got real hot on their trail, they'd have to move on to somewhere else. They'd have to move on at 4:00 in the morning. They didn't have too much to move. They had telephones and the slips.

If you pay off one or two police, they're going to tell the rest of them, and they're going to want a pay off. Before you know it, you're paying off five or six policemen so you don't have no profit. If they get on your trail, you just go.

Another thing with the numbers man, if he'd have a hit, he'd keep talking about "Overlook, overlook." You get to the right person, and somebody going to pay you. Then somebody going to do him in. It's the same way with the street lottery now.

Winston Lang:
The numbers would be calculated from a race track, I think it was out of New York. If you knew how to add them and get the averages, that would be the number for the day. Where I was working, this fellow knew how to get the numbers. He was doing the cleaning and pressing, but when the race results came over the air, he would stop and get out a big piece of cardboard and chart them. Then he would get the number for the day.

Commissioner Edwards would say that if a certain number was going to be hot or pay off too much, then they would change the race results crookedly. One of the numbers that everybody used to hit on when they got hot was Joe Louis' weight. Whenever Joe Louis was fighting, whether he was at 215, or 200 or 190, that was the number people would play. If it looked like that was going to come out, then there'd be so;me shenanigans to change that number.

Mary McClendon:
They also had what was known as "house rent parties," with gambling such as punk and blackjack. That was a way that the house made

money. Plus they would be selling drinks.

Francis Quock:
Many of your elitists, when they didn't want to be known, they'd come to this house.

Mary McClendon:
If you don't have any other means of making money from your roomers, you have your friends come in and they buy drinks or maybe they use a room. You charge them for that instead of going to a hotel. It's a way of making money.

Some fellows would come there from all walks of life. One White fellow, he didn't want to carry the woman in the bedroom and pay the fee for the room. They was on the outside. This colored fellow was drinking. He didn't mean to shoot nobody. He didn't know they was in the close corner up there. He thought he was shooting up against an old tin building. He thought there was nobody around until Mr. Jones hollered, "Ed, you shot me." He couldn't press no charges and told them who he was with. You know, when everybody ran out, they saw who he was with.

Winston Lang:
Even though these kinds of things were going on, they attempted to shield it. There was not openess about it. If a kid was to run into a place where this was going on, he'd be shooed out of there right away. He'd come to ask somebody to cut the grass or sweep the porch. "Get out of here kid." They wouldn't let you hang around. They kept the children away; that's the big difference.

Frances Quock:
On John R, where we had the different night clubs, they would go around at Christmas time to get their bottles of whiskey that the owners would give them. Just to hear them speak, you'd think they never did tht. By the time two or four scout cars pull up and three or four men get out, and you give each one a bottle of whiskey, that's a lot of whiskey. That was after prohibition.

Mary McClendon:
Another thing they used to do to the small store owners, they'd go in there and pick up what they want and the store owner was afraid to say anything. I saw them tell the boy working in there to get some liquor, and he handed it to them and they walked out. They were bad. Cafes the same thing. Fix them some foot and then walk out. In a cafe on Hastings Street one young man said t me, "If they can come in here every morning and eat free, every morning before you go to work, you come in here and I'm going to feed you free.

Winston Lang:
A friend of mine worked on the milk wagon. These were not police officers, just common gangs around the neighborhood. If he'd see them coming, he'd just get ;off the wagon until they took what they wanted and left. Then he'd get back on. This was in the late

30's, early 40's.

Mary McClendon:
I had a terrible experience back in the 60's. Right across the street from 1155 Collingwood was a tall building. The school children knew it. "Don't walk on that side. That's a drug building." They were operating from that building. I decided that somebody had to say something about it so I called down there to the police. I told them what I suspected. I told them my name and my phone number, not where I lived. Then I got suspicious. I said, "You're concerned more about that than you are about catching them." Shortly after that I was coming out of the Wayne Market on the corner of Collingwood and Hamilton. A police officer in uniform walked up to me and asked my name. I told him.

He said, "Come down here to the corner. You see that building over there. Don't you so and so as long as you live call downtown and talk about what you suspect." I was so flabbergasted and surprised. I imagine I was looking at him like a fool. He said, "Go ahead and take my badge number down and turn me in if you want to." I said, "Officer, I wasn't tryhing to get your badge number. I'm just so surprised and shocked. That's why I'm looking at you like that." He told me my black so and so would be dead if I turned him in. I was angry with myself and upset when he said, "Go on."

When I got in the house, I called Ms. Crowley and told her what happened. She said, "You should have known better than that. Walk up here one afternoon, and we'll walk you back home. I want to show you how they're lined up in the back of that building, different police cars." Sure enough I called and walked up there one afternoon. We turned out the lights and watched them. The string would go up, the string would go down. Dope going up, money coming down. Sometime the cars were right close together. They had to come out across that old A & P parking lot, five or six cars. She said that wasn't one night; that was every night. They got to pay them off. They got so bold they'd go in with brown paper sacks. I knew the boys were selling in the sheds. They would get on the corner and sell theirs and wrap it like it was a lunch and pubt grease on it to make you think it's a lunch. The big paper sacks, they owe with theirs. She said, "We got to pay them. They know we in here."

One day a man was beating up a woman in there and I called. They didn't bother to come. That's the reason I won't tell them. I don't care what happens. I saw many times how money transferred. Were drugs is concerned I wouldn't tell them nothing. Because he told me in the profane way, you'll get killed.

Mackie Johnson:
Any police officer who had any personal whims, any attitudes about Black people, he could inflict it upon them. As a young police officer, I could see this. Some police officers, especially those who had a dislike for Blacks, if they had a tie and suit on they

would be subject to a lot of degrading. This was all for the simple reason that he had the opportunity to do it.

A lot of southerners was here. When they started integrating the police department, racism flared up. That kind of attitude is prevalent even today.

From a historical background, when the $5.00 d day started right after World War I, after the Model A Ford, the police officers of the metropolitan cities were more or less oriented to ethnicity. The behavior of Blacks was seemingly so much different. So the first thing they did was go to the south to recruit police officers who "understood them" as they called it. This is the vernacular of police thinking at the time. The south had a different value system. The southern policeman's method of operation was explained very explicitly by W. E. B. Dubois in "The Soul of Black Folks." He said the southern police system was set up to replace slavery. It was to conrol Blacks. It had nothing to do with justice. As Black people we often looked at anyone who had been in the criminal justice system as somewhat of a martyr. It shouldn't be that way.

Up until 1916 there had been seven Black police officers hired by the City of Detroit. The quota of 5 percent was established in 1890 when the Black population was 5 percent. But no matter how many the Police Department recruited, they made sure that as many as went in the front door, just as many went out the back door.

Winston Lang:
I have a buddy whose father was on the police force. Back then Black people were not supposed to buy a Packard car. My friend's father bought a Packard and went and drove it to work. From that point on there was a whole lot of commotion about him and the way he was doing his job. They finagled him around until they got him off the job long enough to lose that Packard. After that they said there must have been some mistake and they brought him back on. The Packard was an elite car in terms of the White establishment.

Mackie Johnson:
When I came to the Detroit Police Academy in 1952 the instructors let us know that the 13th Precinct was one mile square and that there was a crime happening every minute. The newspapers did not tell you anything about the crime situation. The attitude was that for Black people it doesn't matter. Prostitution, all these things were considered part of the basic...

Frances Quock:
I remember between 1952-1954 I was living on Adelaide. I think I was pregnant at the time. This policeman drove up in his car and stopped right in our driveway. He asked me to cover over to him. I would not go because I had fear. I didn't know what he wanted with me. I had not done anything wrong. I don't know whether he's going to get me in the car and take me off or what. I did not go.

I went right into the house.

Mackie Johnson:
That was my area. I worked the street there. At that time the Detroit Police Department had an unofficial policy which is known as disorderly person investigation. Every police officer working could use his judgment to determine who to arrest.

I worked the 13th Precinct, but I also worked the DPI cars. It was amazing at the truth and insight that the prostitutes would have. One lady gave me a totally different insight into what was happening. She said, "You know what you are? You are just a pimp for a john."

"What do you mean?"

She said, "You lock me up. I stay clean. I go down there, and I'm clean, and I'm right back out. They want clean people so they come down here."

Like I said, I worked the cars. My job was to lock them up.

When Jerry Cavanaugh got elected, he appointed a former Supreme Court Justice, George Edwards as a commissioner. Consequently any kind of police action that formerly had been taken for granted was examined and changed. If you wanted to lock a prostitute up, you had to show that she hailed somebody. You just couldn't see them and say, "Girl, I know you're a prostitute. I'm going to lock you up."

Sometimes I would be fascinated by what I would see on the street. Sometimes there would be a woman between 65-70 years old every Sunday morning. We decided to wait and see what happened. It seemed to be too early to go to church, but she looked like she was going to church. Sure enough she was picked up. It was a young guy, a professional man. We asked her, "This is really amazing at your age and everything...."

She said, "That's what's interesting about our society. Sometimes people are attracted to the older folks."

I got some insight into some things that ordinarily I wouldn't get, the fact that a person at a very young age can be attracted to certain things and when they grow up they don't lose it. They still have that attraction.

Well, I used to have to lock up a thousand a month.

Frances Quock:
Many of the women, they couldn't get jobs. Rather than go to some suburban White woman's kitchen and get on her knees and scrub, they found it easier to make money in that way.

Frances Quock:
We used to have girls. You keep a book and the lady of the house would be the Madame. You would call up certain girls. You get the nice ones, the very attractive ones, and they would come to the house.

Winston Lang:
When I was about 10 or 12 my brother was working at a store called the John R Palmer Market. They had me come down as the delivery boy. This call came from one of the apartment buildings for some groceries to be delivered. I think all the people in the store knew what kind of place it was. They send me with the box of groceries. When I got inside, there was this lady who must have weighed 300 pounds. She was standing there with nothing but her panties on, and she was smoking a cigarette. Girls were all around the wall. When I got back to the store, everybody was laughing. I imagine that was a house where you could get a little bit of everything.