**Something for the JPIC Book:**

Mary Lyman RSCJ

RSCJ ministry in Detroit in the years following the riots of 1977.

Detroit, Michigan 1977-1983

I taught social studies and religion at De Porres for seven years. During that time, I created a new

religion curriculum that was sensitive to the Black students and their culture, taught Spanish, American History, and various religion classes. I also did some campus ministry, planning retreats and retreat days. I was also the class monitor for the Senior class, which involved helping students plan homecoming, senior prom, graduation, and generally being there for whomever needed help,

academic or otherwise. For me, it was a huge gift. I had never felt quite confident as a teacher,

but I was so welcomed by students and faculty there, that I grew professionally. I’m still in

touch with some my former students, who have gone on to become teachers, authoresses, business-

people, physicians, and community leaders. Many of them were the first in their families to

earn a high school diploma.

I was also a pastoral associate in another city parish, Christ the King on Detroit’s west side, working

with the Christian Service Commission and the religious education programs in parish and school.

I’ve stayed in touch with that parish too; right now it has one of the two remaining Catholic schools

In the city, and the pastor, now nearing retirement, started the parishe’s own version of the Jesuit Volunteer program.

I lived in the Marygrove community with other RSCJ who were also involved in urban ministry in

Detroit: Oonah Ryan was pastoral associate at St. Agnes Church, near where the 1967 riots started.

She began Neighborhood Artisans as a way of helping people get a GED and training in silk-screening,

a skill which was put to work creating beautiful tote bags, T shirts, purses, ceramics, and other gifts.

Maryellen Harmon was superintendant of the archdiocesan Catholic schools, and used her influence

and gifts to support the city schools particularly. Rosie Quilter was pastoral associate at another

urban parish, St. Rita’s. And Fran Tobin worked at the archdiocesan seminary supervising field place-

ment of the seminarians. Mercedes Serna taught Spanish at another urban Catholic high school, Benedictine. dean Hunter was Delegate for Religious for the archdiocese. And Jan McNabb taught evening classes at Marygrove for people wanting to start a college degree.

Our community was in close touch with our neighbors. We were part of the neighborhood block club which planned a party every summer with wonderful food being cooked on converted oil drums—ribs with special family recipes, fried chicken done the right way. Games for the kids, music,

dancing—it was wonderful and helped us get to know each other. We were active in Neighborhood

Watch and were part of a cooperative that brought bags of fresh vegetables from Eastern Market to

neighbors who wanted to join. And once a month, we had Mass at our house and invited neighbors

to come, for the Mass and for supper and dessert.

There were other RSCJ communities in Detroit at the time: Annette Zipple and Jane Schaberg at Holy Trinity in Corktown, whose pastor Clem Kern was a legend in inner-city ministry. She continued the

SHEP summer program that she had begun in Grosse Pointe, and with Maryellen Harmon worked to

make it possible for women to earn a college degree with classes offered downtown by Madonna College in Livonia. Maryellen and Ines Giraldo went to Epiphany parish, Maryellen as principal and

Ines working in the kindergarten and preschool. Oonah joined Nancy Fearon IHM, and Dot McMichael

to form a community working at Neighborhood Artisans. And Fran Tobin and Barbara Bireley lived

and worked in another city parish, Queen of Hope on Detroit’s west side.

All in all, RSCJ were active in the city of Detroit in the years following the 1967 riots. I’ve probably left a lot out, but hopefully there’s enough give a flavor of RSCJ ministry in Detroit at that time.