

Arrests Mean Nothing Without Conviction: Lena Rivers Smith (Walt Bodine Collection)

Lena Rivers Smith: ... the white community is totally unfamiliar with, the number of times the Negro may be arrested for IV – that’s investigation – for anything, and I don’t exaggerate this so this is why I feel very sensitive on this this point. I’ve always felt this way. Arrests mean nothing without conviction, for one thing. I mean if we are going to talk about real justice and all this. We introduce a record into a criminal trial if we’re trying the man on the habitual criminal act. Now the number of persons arrested does reflect that this is a small minority of the community. To take it any further and say that so many of them had records of this does not help the picture any at all because the Negro community knows it already. The white community needs reassurance only on this one fact: that it is only a very small portion of any section of town. And back to the thing that Tom said, you come back with it a week later and say. “One of the persons arrested had a record of six arrests and all of them were for traffic,” so who’s listening now three weeks later?