



## **INTEVIEW SUMMARY AND TRANSCRIPTION**

**CONNIE MARK**

Ref number: ORAL/7/9

**Transcriber** HILARY BUXTON

### **Content summary**

Connie Mark recalls living in the Notting Hill area during the riots of 1958. During the riots, she went outside to make a call enquiring about a room for rent in West Kensington, only to discover the next day that rioters had completely destroyed the same phone box. While the “old people” had, and still have, prejudices, she recalls, it was the boys with “tight pants, and the brill cream all over their hair... and the big boots” who terrorized the neighbourhood. Mark points out that there were not many black young adults in London in 1958 – most people from the West Indies were older or had very young children. Any young people the same age as the white rioters were the children of white women and black soldiers from the Second World War, who could often pass as white and thus avoided the racial abuse that Mark faced.



[00:00:00.29] Interviewer: So that's just after the Notting Hill Riots as well in 1958.

[00:00:06.25] CM: Oh yes well I lived, I lived in Sherlin Road, during the Notting Hill Riots, and I've experience of that one. My husband was so scared, as soon as he came in from work, in the bed, nobody would get him out. But I, we were very unhappy where we were living, we were living in this house in one room - well, we all had, we all lived in one room, we couldn't afford two. And I heard about another room in West Kensington. So I went out at the corner, can't remember, that was Bromley [unclear] Road, but the corner was Sherlin [unclear] Road, and that other road, to use the phone to find out about this other room, to ring these people. And I was so shocked when I got at it next morning, the same phone that I used, shortly after I came out of it, to tell the boys had thrown stones at it and it was in splinters. I must have missed it by maybe ten, fifteen minutes. That phone box was absolutely stoned. And my husband said, one of these days they're going to get killed, but I didn't mind getting killed cause I had to get out of that house, and I had to go and make that phone call. But people were afraid to go out in the street. Definitely, yes, very ,very afraid, definitely.

[00:01:20.28] Interviewer: Were these youngsters that were causing trouble?

[00:01:23.08] CM: Oh yes it was boys, you could see you know with the tight pants, and the brill cream all over their hair, and you know what now with the big boots. So it was boys, not the old people. The old people had their prejudices, I mean, oh the



old people still have their prejudices. But it was the younger people, the boys that were really the violent ones.

[00:01:47.06] Interviewer: Were there lots of people over there at the time, from the West Indies, 1958, what proportion of people were here at that time?

[00:01:55.17] CM: Oh a lot of people! As a matter of fact, I think there were a lot of people, lot of older people now than then, then and now. And people don't realize the vast amount of people who are either dead or have gone back to the West Indies. You know, you didn't have much young people in those days, cause most people that came here, even if you had a child born then, they'd be only six or so [unclear], wouldn't they, yeah? And most of the black men that came, came in the Army, or the Air Force rather. Most of them came in the Air Force, and of course they married white, mostly, white women, so their children I suppose could pass for white, so they wouldn't be in the danger zone, as their black compatriots, they'd pass. So they didn't have it that hard, especially if it's winter and you cover up your face and see a fair face looking at you, you see?

[00:02:52.04] Interviewer: Yeah. Especially after that period, during the riots, which was in the summer, yeah. You talk of winter. It wasn't winter then, during the riots, was it?

[00:03:09.18] CM: I don't know, such a long time ago I'm not going to say whether it was winter or summer, I just know there was a riot, I know that people, that we were scared of walking in the streets. To be honest with you, you tell me it was summer, then it was summer, it's summer, you know [Laughs].

[00:03:23.09] Interviewer: Yeah, I think it was anyway.



[00:03:25.08] CM: Yeah, yeah yeah. But to us it didn't matter whether it was spring summer autumn or winter. There was riots on, our life was in danger, they were getting at us, and we had to be very careful. We didn't think of the weather, what time of year it was. That doesn't - put it this way - that doesn't stick out in the average person's mind. Yeah?

[00:03:47.11] Interviewer: Yeah, I see.