

# Materials For Embezzlement: How Municipal Corruption Exploited Social and Economic Conditions in Detroit, MI

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines how social and economic conditions in Detroit, MI, during the second half of the twentieth century were exploited in a specific instance of municipal corruption involving the city's Chief of Police, William L. Hart. Drawing on primary source documents, this paper argues that Chief Hart corruptly exploited the city's social and economic conditions and evaded legal intervention over a prolonged period thereby increasing the magnitude of the corruption and exacerbating negative effects on the city's most vulnerable residents. Media coverage surrounding Hart's conviction depicts ramifications difficult to measure highlighting a critical need for research into municipal corruption.

## **Introduction**

This paper will examine municipal corruption as it relates to an embezzlement scandal involving the Chief of Police, William L. Hart, in Detroit, MI. It will describe how the decline of social and economic conditions in Detroit occurred as a result of deindustrialization after the Second World War, and it will argue that Chief Hart exploited these conditions in an embezzlement scheme that ultimately resulted in the misappropriation of \$2.3 million in public funds. An analysis of the Hart embezzlement scandal will address the ways that an instance of municipal corruption disproportionately affected the most vulnerable population of a city. The paper argues that Hart exploited the social and economic conditions in Detroit in order to engage in corruption and to evade legal intervention over a lengthy period, which significantly contributed to the

overall magnitude of the embezzlement and its negative effects on Detroiters.

During the second half of the twentieth century, major cities across the United States provided the setting for urban decline. Detroit was not immune and research of the history of the city during Coleman A. Young's tenure as mayor (1973–1994) reveals substantial evidence about its declining social and economic conditions that are consistent with a national narrative. It is unfortunate that in Detroit, attempts to address urban decline were met with opposition from within the city that undermined these efforts. In examining the scandal involving Detroit Chief of Police William L. Hart, municipal corruption led to the diversion of resources intended to better the city. In one such example, a Detroit narcotics officer testified that while Hart embezzled substantial dollar amounts from a Secret Service Fund, officers had to use their own personal funds in order to carry out narcotics purchases on the streets of Detroit (“Court’s Opinion” 34). The testimony that Detroit officers were forced to use their own money to make narcotics buys is just one example of how the effects of Hart’s embezzlement diverted resources away from Detroit’s struggling police department. While municipal corruption suggests that the diversion of resources is a serious negative symptom, what is unique about this specific embezzlement case in Detroit is both its involvement of the Chief of Police as well as the magnitude of the corruption, which, as this paper will show, is tied to Chief Hart’s exploitation of Detroit’s social and economic conditions.

### **Literature Review**

When one studies corruption in American cities, it is likely that this consideration includes a reference to the Gilded Age, a time at the turn of the twentieth century that is often likened to high rates of corruption, robber barons, and rampant capitalism at the expense of the working class. Scholars Kimberly L. Nelson and Whitney B. Alfonso conclude that

fortunately, as a whole, municipal corruption has declined in the decades since the Gilded Age in part due to the development of stricter legal sanctions and the greater potential for discovery and media exposure (591). However, Nelson and Alfonso also posit that despite low levels of government corruption today compared with levels of corruption one hundred years ago, civilian trust in government bodies and officials is at an all-time low (591). Today's lower levels of corruption in contrast with low levels of trust in government presents an interesting paradox. Despite lower levels of corruption, Joaquin Jay Gonzalez III and Roger L. Kemp in *Corruption and American Cities*, argue that corruption today still poses a serious concern for American cities as it directly drains millions of dollars through activities such as embezzlement and extortion and indirectly through the cost incurred in order to prosecute those engaged in acts of corruption. Additionally, *Corruption* draws attention to tools available to American cities today that may be effective in lessening the negative impacts of corruption such as a grand jury, inspector general, and internal and external audits (Gonzalez III and Kemp 2). In placing Detroit into a national context, Dick Simpson, et al., provides U.S. Department of Justice data which shows the highest levels of municipal corruption as occurring in the Chicago metropolitan area, followed by California's central district (Los Angeles), and New York's southern district (Manhattan, the Bronx, and surrounding areas), respectively (Simpson, et al. 4). Though Detroit falls short of the top ten list regarding municipal corruption rates, it is important to note the prevalence of municipal corruption that occurs in American cities in order to determine whether the events involving Chief Hart were singular in nature. Of the existing scholarship, a consensus among scholars notes that while studies of government corruption at the state and national level are available to researchers, studies at the local level are more limited making municipal corruption not only a difficult topic to study, but one that reflects a need for additional research. Although information available on municipal corruption at the local level is limited,

one such study was instrumental in understanding its causes. In an effort to predict where corruption may occur, Nelson and Alfonso highlight a correlation between increased poverty and corruption, where low-income communities are more often victimized (598).

The existing scholarship notes the positive correlation between increased poverty and incidents of municipal corruption; in this analysis of municipal corruption in the city of Detroit, it is imperative that one considers how economic and social dilemmas shaped the city's decline during the postwar period. *Detroit—A Reexamination*, by American labor activist and Detroit historian B.J. Widick depicts the social and economic conditions in Detroit in the decades that followed the 1967 rebellion (231). Finally, historian Kevin Boyle rounds out an understanding of the causes of the 1967 rebellion, of which the roots, Boyle asserts, stretch back to the city's deindustrialization that began after the Second World War (Boyle 110–14). Scholarship on the city of Detroit provides consensus regarding how deindustrialization, the erosion of manufacturing jobs, and white flight laid the groundwork for the social conditions that afflicted the city leading up to and after the 1967 rebellion.

### **Method**

In researching municipal corruption in the city of Detroit, I wanted to investigate the Hart embezzlement scandal that resulted in the misappropriation of \$2.3 million in public funds in order to understand how such an extreme scenario of corruption and victimization of the public was fostered by the exploitation of the city's social and economic conditions. I utilized a variety of primary sources that included court documents regarding the case against Hart, a personal letter from Hart, a press release from the desk of Mayor of Detroit, Coleman A. Young, and newspaper reports that captured the public's reaction to the corruption. Through my research, I discovered that Hart intentionally exploited the

social and economic conditions in the city of Detroit in order to engage in corruption, as well as to subvert attempts to hold him accountable. In this way, Hart circumvented the very systems designed to deter municipal corruption which drastically impacted the overall magnitude of the embezzlement that took place. This is significant for two reasons: first, very few studies have been done on municipal corruption and the severity of this specific act of corruption exemplifies how even at the local level, corruption can have disastrous impacts. Also, while it is difficult to measure the full cost of the corruption in this case, by considering the social and economic conditions in Detroit, one can begin to consider how this specific act of municipal corruption victimized Detroit's most vulnerable residents.

## Results

The social and economic conditions in Detroit provided the foundation for Chief Hart to exploit during a lengthy period in which he engaged in an embezzlement scheme. Detroit in 1976, the year that Hart was appointed to Chief of Police by mayor Coleman A. Young, was a city submerged in upheaval following the 1967 rebellion that garnered both national intervention and attention. When Hart stepped into his role as the police department's chief, many of the conditions illuminated by the 1967 rebellion were still unresolved. In *Ruins of Detroit*, Kevin Boyle shows how deindustrialization and the loss of auto manufacturing jobs impacted the city's high level of unemployment: "Detroit lost 19 percent of its jobs between 1969 and 1973; by 1975 the unemployment rate had climbed to a catastrophic 18 percent" (120). In addition to unemployment, Detroit's economic base was further eroded by white flight which reallocated not only the city's white population to the suburbs, but with it a significant portion of the city's resources and tax revenue. Detroit historian Sidney Fine urges that though, "Detroit had been plagued by white flight since the late 1940s ... the flow of whites to the suburbs reached a flood tide in the

late 1960s and early 1970s” (Boyle 119). These accounts suggest that when Hart was appointed to the position of Chief of Police, Detroit was a city in which opportunities for legitimate economic enterprises, personal advancement, and quality of life were largely unavailable to its remaining residents.

Further underscoring how the conditions in Detroit provided Hart with an opportunity for exploiting them are the social issues that resulted from the city’s deindustrialization, white flight, and high unemployment. As the Chief of Police, Hart was ultimately tasked with addressing the fallout of the aforementioned conditions, particularly with how they related to the city’s social strife during this period. In *Detroit—A Reexamination*, Widick describes how, “in the face of such dire economic conditions, the expansion of an underground drug economy—with its attendant problems of increased crime and murder—is inevitable” (235).

In this way, Widick’s assertion represents the unique relationship between the economic and social conditions in Detroit, where one ultimately provides causation for the other. The repercussions, then, of the aforementioned economic downfall in Detroit are made apparent in such statistics as the city’s per capita homicide rate in 1985 being seven times the national average (Widick 232). Further, the bleak outlook on crime in Detroit also involves how violence had implications for one of the most vulnerable groups in the city; namely, the youth population. Instances of youth killed by gunfire in Detroit increased between 1985 and 1986 (31 died from gunfire in 1985, versus 43 youths shot fatally in 1986) (Widick 232). References to instances of violence in the city have been made in order to exemplify the implications of Detroit’s economic degradation, of which together these factors, economic and social, exemplify the conditions impacting Detroit during the time that Hart presided as Chief of Police. Further, these very same conditions became the underpinnings that Hart would manipulate in order to maintain authority over the covert nature of the police department’s activities, and

to conceal his behavior in an embezzlement scheme.

### *The Embezzlement*

In 1991, Hart was indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of embezzlement in which it was alleged that, together with Kenneth Weiner, the two men engaged in an embezzlement scheme over a lengthy period in which \$2.3 million was misappropriated from a Secret Service Fund created to fund the Detroit Police Department's crime intervention efforts. Hart was subsequently convicted in 1992 and received a harsh sentence of ten years in federal prison ("Hart's Conviction" 1). The Avern L. Cohn Papers at the Walter P. Reuther Library contain court documents pertaining to the August 1992 sentencing hearing of Chief Hart. In the sentencing hearing of Chief Hart, the defendant (Hart) requested a downward departure in sentencing based largely on his reputation as the city's Chief of Police; whereas, the prosecution argued that an upward departure from the sentencing guidelines was warranted due to the criminal nature of the defendant's behavior that was both extreme and also repetitive over a lengthy period. Ultimately, the court denied the defendant's request for a downward departure from the sentencing guidelines and instead determined that an upward departure, in which Hart received ten years in federal prison, was justified ("Court's Opinion" 38). United States District Judge Paul V. Gadola sided with the prosecution's request for an upward departure from the sentencing guidelines, in which the prosecution based its request on the severity of the corruption exemplified by: (1) the duration and repetitiveness of the criminal conduct; (2) Hart's unique responsibility to the public as Chief of the Detroit Police Department; (3) Hart's efforts to conceal his crimes; (4) the public's trust in the rectitude of the Detroit Police Department; and (5) misapplication of financial resources of Detroit's law enforcement activities ("Court's Opinion" 5-29). The extensive proposal by the prosecution urged that Hart's criminal enterprises warranted a harsh sentence and provided evidence to how

Hart's embezzlement preyed upon the dire social and economic conditions in Detroit.

The first premise of the prosecution's request for an upward departure from the sentencing guidelines examines the duration and repetitiveness of Hart's criminal conduct. While the total amount of stolen funds was determined to be \$2.3 million, the embezzlement more accurately occurred in two factions, which is reflected by Chief Hart's conviction in two separate felony embezzlement charges:

- The criminal conduct involved in the Count Two embezzlement commenced July 11, 1986 and concluded October 13, 1988 ("Court's Opinion" 6).
- The criminal conduct involved in the Count Three embezzlement commenced July 23, 1982 and continued until December 4, 1989 ("Court's Opinion" 6).

Combined, the prosecution outlined how the corruption "covered a period of more than 88 months, or, stated differently, just over seven and one-third years" ("Court's Opinion" 6). The prosecution addressed Chief Hart's conviction of two separate counts of embezzlement that combined highlight the severity of the municipal corruption due to the duration over which it occurred. When one considers the attention given to the social and economic conditions in the city during a similar period, it becomes more troubling that Hart continued to steal from the city over such a length of time and amid the city's coinciding struggles.

The duration of Chief Hart's corrupt behavior (over seven years) helps to begin to illuminate the severity of this specific instance of municipal corruption; however, it is through an examination of the repetitive nature of Hart's criminal activities—specifically, the transactions and their dollar amounts—that the devastation and exploitation comes into greater view. The first premise of the prosecution's sentencing



request, in addition to duration, outlined the repetitive nature of Hart's activities through evidence of Hart's withdrawals from the Secret Service Fund. He did this in two ways: Count Two of embezzlement consisted of 54 instances of checks payable to the sham corporations created by Kenneth Weiner which totaled \$1,292,305 ("Court's Opinion" 7); and Count Three of embezzlement differentiates the checks that were drawn to cash by Hart, where 98 separate instances resulted in a total of \$1,292,542.49, of which only \$237,136.69 was determined to be legitimate for a resulting total of \$1,055,405.90 in stolen funds ("Court's Opinion" 7).

These two separate counts of embezzlement together nearly reflect the largely publicized total of the corruption; however, it must be noted that together these totals sum to \$2.3 million, whereas the media largely published that the total amount of stolen funds was \$2.6 million. Regardless, the repetitive nature of Hart's behavior is made clear upon investigating the specific transactions, in which the prosecution presented a particularly condemning instance of Hart's activities. In one brief period, Hart embezzled \$65,000 in four days with checks of \$20,000, \$20,000, and \$25,000 being drawn to cash over the short window of time ("Court's Opinion" 8). Such behavior was remarkably not unique, as the full record of Hart's activities highlights similar accounts of checks without supporting documentation being written to cash. Hart's illegal activities were significant in light of their length over time and repetitive nature during a period which was previously defined by social ramifications with substantial linkage to the city's economic deterioration since at least the 1940s. In this light, it is possible to begin to consider how the social and economic conditions in Detroit provided Hart with an opportunity to engage in an embezzlement scandal.

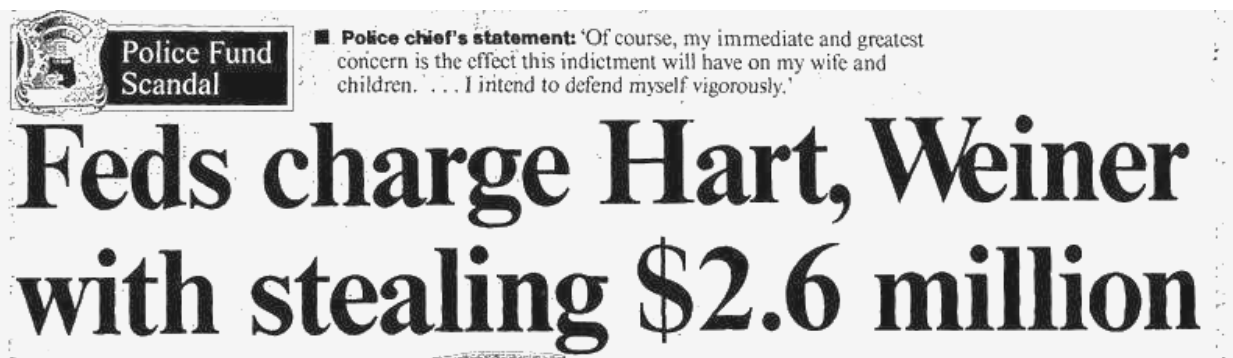


Figure 1. An inaccurate headline reporting the embezzlement scandal; court documents reveal that the full amount of funds determined to be used for illegitimate purposes was \$2.3 million. (Image Source: "Feds Charge Chief Hart" The Detroit News, February 12, 1991)

### *The Coverup*

Beyond the initial embezzlement, the lengths that Hart went through in order to avoid detection—and when his actions were brought into question, to silence attempts to hold him accountable—further exemplify how Hart exploited the social and economic conditions in Detroit. The first example of Hart’s exploitative behavior is evidenced by the inherent confidential nature of the Secret Service Fund, secrecy that Hart maintained not only to engage in corruption but to avoid detection. When pressed by city officials, including the Auditor-General and Detroit City Council, Hart claimed that to disclose any information regarding the nature of the Secret Service Fund would, “jeopardize the lives of police officers and innocent civilians” (“Court’s Opinion” 18). As Chief of Police, Hart had supreme administrative control over the Secret Service Fund, of which he maintained the importance of its confidential nature, and where failure to comply would represent a direct threat to the police staff he oversaw, as well as the general public. In this way, Hart exploited the lives and safety of officers and civilians in order to maintain the covert nature of the fund and his illegal activities within it. Further, when pressed by city officials including the Auditor-General about the nature of withdrawals from the fund, Hart continued to lie about any apparent threat to the well-being of

his police staff and civilian population only to conceal the true nature of his behavior.

Hart also leveraged the nature of his role as Detroit's police chief—that is, to actively pursue legitimate policing concerns in a city where crime would have been of general importance to city officials and the public—by enacting a sham police program named Covert Operation 82-1. Covert Operation 82-1 was a program designed by Hart to mislead investigators about missing dollars from the Secret Service Fund. During Hart's sentencing trial, the prosecution noted a condemning similarity between the \$1,203,140 originally attributed to the operation compared to the \$1,292,542.49 totaling from the checks that Hart wrote payable to cash ("Court's Opinion" 21). Covert Operation 82-1, ultimately proven to be illegitimate, was responsible for a list of expenditures involving activities such as securing Mayor Young's residence and office, planning and security for the International Chiefs of Police Convention, and investigating threats against members of Mayor Young's family ("Court's Opinion" 21-2). Hart claimed that Covert Operation 82-1 was designed for legitimate police purposes; however, the similarities between the dollar amount attributed to the operation and the amount reflected in the checks Hart wrote to cash suggests a more likely interpretation: crime in the city was only seen by Hart as a legitimate concern that he, as Chief of Police, would be able to manipulate in order to engage in embezzlement, and later, use to try to conceal his crimes.

At times, there were attempts to probe into Chief Hart's covert activities as the Chief of Police, however, these attempts were met with hostility by the police chief as evidenced in a letter from Hart to Donald Pailen, Corporation Counsel, regarding the 1989 investigation of Kenneth Weiner (a few years later, Hart would be found to be a co-conspirator in Weiner's illegal activities). In the letter, Hart addressed Mr. Pailen regarding his comments directed to the City Council in which he claimed

that Hart recommended that payments to a Mr. James Andary (as part of a Special Investigations Team) for his services investigating Mr. Weiner should remain covert in nature. Hart, of course, subverted allegations of any wrongdoing which turned hostile as he advised Mr. Pailen that, “as Chief of Police, I have the power and authority to authorize covert investigations” (“Hart Letter” 2). This letter from Chief Hart reveals that as police chief, Hart maintained his authority to utilize covert behavior—which he deemed essential to the safety of police officers and civilians—in order to silence attempts to hold him accountable.

A final aspect of how Hart exploited the conditions in Detroit is evidenced by how Hart responded to his indictment, in which his attempts to cover his tracks suggests how Hart used his position as Chief of Police to foster an environment of secrecy among the Detroit Police Department’s lower ranks. In the Hart embezzlement scandal, only Hart and Weiner (in a separate trial) were convicted of corruption-related charges; however, researching related documents in circulation with top officials during the same period suggests some level of complicit behavior from within the Detroit Police Department and the City of Detroit. While Mayor Coleman A. Young maintained an attitude of neutrality towards Hart following his indictment, his treatment of the police chief reflects a level of sympathy towards Hart; determining if Young’s attitude towards Hart warrants allegations of involvement could surely be the topic of additional research. Regarding Mayor Young’s attitude towards Hart, a press release following the announcement of Hart’s indictment is of interest in which Young announced his suspension of the chief, with pay (“Mayor’s Press Release” 3). In the same press release, Young asserted, regarding Hart’s indictment, that the charges, “resulted from a sting operation that was a de facto entrapment and the chief got caught in a net in which he was probably not the primary target” (“Press Release” 3). In the introductory statement by the court in Hart’s sentencing trial, Judge Paul V. Gadola, United States District Judge, commented that in addition

to generally exemplifying an “Old Boys Network” attitude in which the Detroit Police Department appeared to only desire to protect their own (Hart), the City of Detroit refused to honor Grand Jury subpoenas for Police Department records, including bank records, by citing “Executive Privilege” (“Introductory Statement” 1, 3). What stands out regarding the reaction by city organizations and officials following Hart’s indictment is that there did not seem to be a general rallying around energized movements to exterminate potential corruption from a department whose main purpose is to defend the citizens of Detroit. As such, it can be concluded that the conditions within the city did not seem to be of general concern to the agencies designed to address them. Instead, the police department, led by Hart, followed the chief’s lead with regards to maintaining a commitment to secrecy surrounding the department’s behavior which exemplifies how Hart’s exploitation of the conditions in Detroit also had a ripple effect which extended to the police department, as well as the mayor’s office.

### *The Victims*

Hart’s actions in the embezzlement that drained the city’s Secret Service Fund have been defined by their duration and repetitive nature, and also by the efforts to conceal them; however, Hart’s exploitation of the social and economic conditions in Detroit are also apparent in relation to the victims of his crimes, those being the citizens of Detroit. Hart’s criminal actions victimized Detroit residents largely in two ways: first, the embezzlement resulted in the misapplication of financial resources from legitimate law enforcement activities. Also, public knowledge of the embezzlement scandal ultimately eroded public trust in the Detroit Police Department. Commenting on the conditions in Detroit during Hart’s tenure as Chief of Police, the prosecution, during Hart’s sentencing, urged that in relation to crime, the City of Detroit was “tortured” (“Court’s Opinion” 30). Hart’s embezzlement had several catastrophic effects on the

city's ability to utilize its resources and ability to address this "torture" that it experienced. As the testimony of one officer concluded, Detroit officers were often left to use their own money to purchase narcotics on the streets of Detroit ("Court's Opinion" 34). In addition, Hart diverted police officers from their posts in order to provide security to the mayor and for his own personal use, as in Hart's utilizing of department command officer Joel Gilliam to cash checks written by Hart ("Court's Opinion" 33). In this way, Hart misapplied not only financial resources from the Detroit Police Department, but also diverted police staff, where in a city experiencing a crime crisis, there would have been significant negative effects on the public from the department's reduced ability to fight crime. Finally, the exposure to the public that their own Chief of Police could be involved in such reprehensible acts drastically lessened the public's confidence in the Detroit Police Department ("Court's Opinion" 26). Hart's embezzlement as it relates to its victims, the citizens of Detroit, is complicated. Although the full amount of the \$2.3 million embezzled by Hart has been tallied and noted, there is essentially no way to calculate the full extent of the damages incurred on behalf of the public. What can be said, however, is that Hart's actions not only exploited the conditions in Detroit, but also put its citizens at an increased risk of crime due to decreasing the overall efficiency of the police department.

### *The Media*

During Hart's indictment, conviction and sentencing in the embezzlement scandal, various portrayals of Hart in the media depicted the public's mixed reactions. Following Hart's initial indictment in 1991, rather than determine if the specific charges against Hart held any truth, local media coverage largely relied on public opinion. The media's coverage largely consisted of considerable scrutiny of Hart's private life, particularly in alleged affairs with multiple women outside of his longtime marriage to Laura Hart. One such 1992 *Detroit News* article even denounced the actual

embezzlement in favor of a marriage investigation: “That’s the trouble with lawyers—they miss the good stuff” (McWhirter). Attitudes were similar in the *Detroit Free Press* echoing, “Here’s hoping Hart is a good cop” in an 1991 article of the same title that argued that, “the real William Hart is a decent guy” and, “he’s not the world’s best administrator, but he’s not a crook” (Watson). There was a large media effort to depict Hart as a decent man, perhaps a poor administrator, but nonetheless a family man which is evidenced explicitly in a *Detroit News* picture depicting Hart attending with his wife an event at the Greater Grace Temple, a well-known church in Detroit (Weiss). The media’s portrayal of Hart as a good cop mixed up with the wrong people aligned with Hart’s defense in trial which attempted to show that while he may have been involved in a scam, it was only due to his own shortcomings as an administrator. Perhaps the fact that the city’s Chief of Police could be involved in such a grotesque display of corruption was too much for the struggling city to digest, or perhaps Hart had duped his supporters as well. Reactions to his eventual conviction only deepened the mixed emotions surrounding Hart: was he a criminal, or as Mayor Young described, a good man, “caught in a net?” (“Press Release” 3) One reaction in particular, featured in a 1992 *Detroit Free Press* article that followed Hart’s conviction presents another impact of Hart’s embezzlement in which the trial and conviction were just the tip of the iceberg. One member of the 6th Precinct patrol force described how the 1992 guilty verdict, “makes it extremely hard for the street officers to do their job because of the perception that we’re corrupt and brutal” (Schaefer). This final inclusion highlights that even after the fact Hart’s embezzlement continued to have lasting implications in the city of Detroit where Hart’s actions subjected the police force to increased difficulties to carry out their jobs because of a general lack of trust surrounding the department as a whole.



DIANE WEISS/The Detroit News

**Police Chief William Hart (foreground) enjoys a recent concert of gospel music at the Greater Grace Temple in Detroit.**

*Figure 2. Police Chief William Hart and his wife, Laura Hart, at the Greater Grace Temple, a well-known church within the city limits of Detroit. Some media portrayals of Hart paralleled a legal defense that portrayed him as a family man and a decent cop. (Image source: "Frequent Top-Level Scandals Tarnish Detroit Image," The Detroit News, January 1, 1991.)*

## Conclusion

Detroit Chief of Police William Hart exploited the economic and social conditions in Detroit which allowed him to engage in an embezzlement scheme and to evade legal intervention over a lengthy period which contributed to the overall magnitude of the embezzlement scandal. It was described that the conditions in Detroit surrounding Hart's tenure as the city's Chief of Police were significantly impacted by the city's economic decline caused by deindustrialization which, in turn, created significant levels of economic disparity and social conditions ruptured by



increased crime and violence. Scholarship on municipal corruption noted that while social conditions have been linked to corruption, American cities have systems in place to deter such corruption. However, William Hart exploited Detroit's conditions and disabled attempts to hold him accountable. Hart's deliberate tampering with systems designed to deter corruption allowed him to remain unchecked for a lengthy period which resulted in the overall magnitude of the corruption, that is, \$2.3 million of misappropriated funds with a true cost of victimization that is impossible to measure. This specific case of municipal corruption identifies an alarming scenario where the decline of social and economic conditions in an urban setting were exploited thus victimizing the city's most vulnerable individuals. The existing scholarship also noted a gap in the studying of municipal corruption. In this way, this paper warns that corruption at the local level has the potential to be as severe as at the state or national level. The researcher hopes to draw attention to a need for additional research on local government corruption in order to prevent future occurrences of similar devastation in urban settings stricken with social and economic vulnerabilities.

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