

A History of Civil Rights and Social Change in Pinellas County

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- :05 As the saying goes, every thousand-mile journey begins with the first step.
— *Martin Luther King Jr.*
- :16 Today's social change advocates can learn a great deal from stories about people who have previously stood together to challenge the status quo and fight for equity. People are capable of profound transformation when working together in social movements. Locally, the black community was part of a national civil rights movement that organized and mobilized to end racial discrimination and gain equal rights. Their stories are lessons in heroism and solidarity. They also reveal the hard, strategic work required to create change. The struggle to end racism in our community is far from over, other types of discrimination such as gender, sexual expression, disability, age, and income also unfairly and unnecessarily take their toll on public health. As we work toward a community where everyone can thrive, there are many new chapters of social change waiting to be written.

The Ground We Stand On

- 1:32 The roots on inequity in Pinellas County started as early as 1528 with Panfilo de Narvaez landed on the shores of Boca Ciega Bay. Spain was exploring the new world looking for gold> Narvaez and his men claimed the lands and the people they encountered for their king and church. With them was Estavanico, Little Stephen, an enslaved man from Morocco, believed to be the first black person on the continent. Narvaez explored Florida along the Gulf Coast in Texas and eventually made his way to northern Mexico to meet up with the rest of his expedition. He and his men pillaged storehouses and exposed the indigenous Tocobaga people to disease.
- 2:14 The Tocobaga tribe primarily inhabited west central Florida around the northern end of Old Tampa Bay and into Pinellas County. Their culture was a blend of indigenous cultures from Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. It is believed that their principal town was in Safety Harbor. Due to disease and raids, by 1709, the Tocobaga tribe was all but destroyed.
- 2:43 Around 100 years later, the Seminole people fled into Florida after a disastrous war against white settlers led by General Andrew Jackson. As the United States expanded and Florida became a US territory in 1821, the government forced many Seminoles to relocate to Oklahoma. Today, the Seminoles remaining in Florida call themselves the Unconquered People and are descendants of the roughly 300 people who avoided capture by the US Army. Currently, more than 2000 native



people live on six reservations in the state. They have established themselves in such industries as tourism, citrus, and cattle.

Building Everything but Wealth

3:31 The Orange Belt Railway came to St. Petersburg in 1888. Black workers built the beds and laid the rails. Some stayed to settle the city's first black neighborhood while white people rode the railway and brought the first wave of the growing resort town's tourist trade. Black labor was critical to the development of the city. Not only did black laborers construct the Orange Belt Railway, pave the streets, build the sidewalks, and dig the sewer lines, but they also helped to build some of the structures still in existence today.

4:03 The first black settlers on the lower Pinellas peninsula were John Donaldson and Anna Germain. Donaldson, a formerly enslaved person and Germain, who would become his wife and the mother of his 11 children, came to the area in 1868 in the employment of Lewis Bell, Jr., a white homesteader. The Donaldsons purchased 40 acres of land near what is now known as Lake Maggoire. Donaldson worked as a truck farmer among other things to support his family and he served as the community mail carrier. Ed Donaldson, the son of John Donaldson and Anna Germain Donaldson, was noted as the oldest living native-born resident of St. Petersburg and as Pinellas first native-born black male when he died on November 13, 1967. The Donaldsons were the only black family until the influx of black workers to help build the railroad. Those settlers were not treated with the same respect as Donaldson. One black family was tolerable, but as more black people migrated to the area, attitudes changed.

5:26 Elder Jordan, Sr., born into slavery about 1850, came to St. Petersburg in 1904. Jordan was married to Mary Frances Strobels, a Cherokee who stood more than six feet tall. Strobels was from Rosewood, a community that was notoriously destroyed in 1923 during a massacre of blacks by whites. Jordan owned considerable property on the south side including a livery stable and a filling station on the corner of 5th Avenue and 16th St. Jordan and his sons built houses and helped open several businesses in the black community. He also opened a beach for African-Americans and operated a bus line.

In 1925, he saw a need for a gathering place for the growing black community and built the Jordan Dance Hall, now known as the Manhattan Casino. He built his gathering hall on 22nd Street, the Deuces, where people of color could shop, socialize, and conduct business without the stigma of racism tainting every interaction or transaction. It became the venue for local black artists and was a significant stop in what was known as Chitlin Circuit. The Manhattan was to the black community what the Coliseum was to the white community. The building was designated a historic landmark by the city council in 1994.



In 1929, after the Stock Market crashed, Jordan was one of the few people in the community whose money wasn't in the banks. To help keep the city afloat, he loaned some of it to the city government. Jordan Elementary School and Jordan Park Housing Project are named for Elder Jordan and a monument in his likeness and honor stands at the southwest corner of the Manhattan Casino property.

7:52 The railroad laborers and other black workers who came after them were forced into circumscribed neighborhoods, settling in St. Petersburg. Often these neighborhoods were redlined by banks, meaning that mortgage loans could not be obtained or were available only at very high rates.

8:08 Black people were relegated to live in certain segregated neighborhoods, safely away from the tourists, white neighborhoods, and downtown businesses. Most African-American communities in the city consisted primarily of dirt roads and unpainted shacks owned by absentee white landlords who were often indifferent to the property and the people who rented it. There were a few exceptions to living in the neighborhoods relegated to blacks. According to early city directories, several colored families lived in what were not traditional black neighborhoods. Over 100 black workers who helped build the Orange Belt Railway made their home in Pepper Town, located east of what is now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr Street and Third and Fourth Avenues South. The area around Booker Creek, along Ninth Street, south of First Avenue South, was initially called Cooper's Quarters and later became known as the Gas Plant area. It was named for the two large cylinders housing the natural gas supply for the city.

9:26 There was a thriving business district in the Gas Plant area and it was the home of Davis Academy, the first black school in St. Petersburg. In 1894, Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church was founded at 912 Third Avenue North. A 1912 Polk City directory listed the location as Third Avenue North and Williams Court. The third African-American community of Methodist Town grew around it and was named for the church. It was on a side of town that was generally off limits unless you were white.

10:10 Most of the money earned by black workers went to white businesses outside their communities. The result was a damaged ability to build inter-generational family wealth. A study in 2018 revealed that three out of four neighborhood that were redlined 80 years ago continue to struggle economically. Today nearly 26% of St. Petersburg's African-American population has income considered below poverty level.

Segregated Health Care

10:45 Between 1903 and 1913 three hospitals opened in St. Petersburg and none of them would care for African-Americans. In July 1913, the old Samaritan Hospital was moved to a new site to serve the black community. There were no doctors on



staff and a handful of nurses provided treatment primarily to patients with communicable diseases earning the facility the name of Pest House. In 1923, the 3500 square foot Mercy Hospital opened and in 1926, Dr. James Maxie Ponder became the first black staff physician.

11:23 Dr. Ponder and his family, wife, Fannie Ayer Ponder, and son, Ernest moved here from Ocala, Florida in 1926 and finally, Mercy Hospital had its first black physician. He was the only black staff physician for more than 10 years. In 1940, Dr. Breaux Martin moved to St. Petersburg, opened a medical office and joined the staff at Mercy Hospital becoming the hospital's second black staff physician. Two of his sons were born at Mercy. Tired of the restrictions of Jim Crow, Dr. Martin moved to Toledo, Ohio in 1949.

Dr. Orion T. Ayer, Sr., filled the void left by Dr. Martin's departure. He arrived with his wife, Helen, and his three children in 1949 and provided medical care for the community for more than 35 years. Dr. Fred W. Alsup opened his private practice and joined the Mercy Hospital staff in 1950. With his arrival, Mercy Hospital now had three doctors on staff. Dr. Alsup was also one of the pioneer civil rights activists in our community who fought against the segregated conditions in the hospital and the city at large. Dr. Ponder retired as city physician to the black community in 1951 and over the next few years, three more physicians joined the Mercy Hospital staff. Drs. Wimbish, Rose, and Taliaferro.

In 1951, Dr. Wimbish established a practice in Tampa and built a home, which was burned by arsonists. He moved his family to St. Petersburg, joined the staff at Mercy Hospital and was named assistant city physician. In 1953, Dr. Eugene Rose joined the Mercy staff. He cared for Dr. Alsup's patients when he was recalled to the military from 1953 until 1955. Dr. Harry F. Taliaferro was the last black physician to join Mercy's staff. He originally established his practice in Clearwater but later moved to St. Petersburg.

14:07 Other staff at Mercy Hospital included a cadre of trained nurses who assisted the physicians in providing essential and quality medical care. And gray ladies, volunteers who performed non-medical tasks freeing nurses for other duties. Healthcare workers at Mercy Hospital struggled to make use of outdated equipment discarded from Mound Park, faced overcrowding and had no pharmacy and no laboratory. For nearly 40 years, Mercy Hospital was the only hospital in the city that treated and cared for African-Americans.

14:39 On February 23, 1961, in a private meeting, a decision was made to integrate Mound Park Hospital. Two days later on February 25, 1961 Dr. Fred Alsup admitted Mrs. Altamease Chapman to Mound Park Hospital, now Bay Front Medical Center, effectively desegregating the whites only hospital. In 1966, Mercy Hospital transferred the last of its patients and staff to Mound Park and after 43 years, closed its doors. Dr. Ponder, Mercy's first black physician, died on March 4, 1958. It is said that he wrote the first prescription for Webb's Drug Store. When Dr.



Ponder died in 1958, the flag at City Hall was flown at half staff during his funeral and a bronze plaque was placed in his memory in a new wing of Bay Front Medical Center.

Lynching in St. Petersburg

- 16:00 The following section contains images that some viewers may find disturbing. Viewer discretion is advised.
- 16:11 From reconstruction until the civil rights movement, white people carried out lynchings as a way to terrorize, punish, and control black people.
- 16:23 Between 1900 and 1930, Florida had the highest ratio of lynchings to minority populations of any state in the country and Tampa had the most lynchings of any Florida city or county during the same period. In 1905, John Thomas was lynched on Christmas Day. Thomas killed the St. Petersburg police chief while being arrested on a disorderly conduct charge. A mob of white men stormed the jail, overpowered police officers, and shot and killed Thomas. No one was arrested or charged with his murder.
- 17:09 John Evans and Ebenezer Tobin, both African-Americans, were suspected of murdering white photographer, Ed Sherman, and attacking his wife, Mary Sherman. John Evans was lynched at Ninth Street, now Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Street and Second Avenue South on Tuesday, November 12, 1914 by a mob of 1500 white men, women, and children. A year later, Ebenezer Tobin was put on trial for murdering Ed Sherman and attacking his wife. He was found guilty on September 17, 1915 and sentenced to be hanged. It took the jury 15 minutes to determine his guilt. He was hanged at 11:06 AM on October 22. His execution was Pinellas County's first legal hanging. He was buried in a pauper's grave.
- Parker Watson was lynched on May 9, 1926 at the hands of a group of masked, armed men as three police officers were taking him to the county jail. His body was found along an isolated road the next morning. He had been shot five times and had acid or other chemicals poured on his face. Unlike the lynching of John Evans in 1914, when public officials and upstanding citizens were members of the lynch mob and were said to have planned it the night before, the Watson lynching brought outcries from a number of people, including St. Petersburg ministers. During a special session, the county commission condemned the lynching in a resolution and offered a reward of \$1000 for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the guilty parties. The perpetrators were never identified or prosecuted.
- 19:27 At the time of the lynchings, St. Petersburg was promoting itself as a progressive city, open to all who wanted to rest and relax in warm tropical breezes. The mob that lynched John Evans walked west on Central Avenue past these buildings.



These documented lynchings are likely not the only ones that occurred. The death of so many black people today at the hands of law enforcement and self-styled vigilantes reminds us that the fight for equal rights and the equal value of black lives is far from won.

(Some) Women Get the Vote

- 20:10 In 1920, the Florida legislature failed to support the 19th Amendment granting women the right to vote, but enough states did so to make it law. May Mann Jennings, married to Florida's governor in 1900 used her position as First Lady to campaign for women's right to vote and founded Florida's League of Women Voters.
- 20:31 The suffrage movement was supported by such black leaders as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Mary Church Terrell, and Frederick Douglas, yet with the passage of the 15th Amendment, white suffragists began to push for voting rights for white women only, excluding all women of color. Many of these suffragists worked alongside and even accepted funding from white supremacists. When the first suffrage parade was held in 1913, planners initially decided to segregate the march. They later agreed to allow black suffragists to march in the rear. Ida B. Wells Barnett, leader of the anti-lynching crusade ignored the instruction, stepped off the sidewalk and marched with the Illinois delegation. Also marching were 22 founding members of the black sorority, Delta Sigma Theta. In 1920, the 19th Amendment guaranteeing women the right to vote was passed, but it didn't guarantee that right for all women. It would be 45 more years before black women would be able to vote, not until the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
- 22:06 Strategic disenfranchisement of black and brown people remains a popular political tactic. It has been more difficult to combat since the 2018 Supreme Court ruling reversed federal oversight of state election practices. This opened the door to aggressive purges of voter rolls and other voter suppression tactics that disproportionately impact communities of color.

Integrating Public Spaces

- 22:38 St. Petersburg's Central Avenue was famous for its green benches. They were a symbol of relaxation and spoke a message of welcome for the city, but like many other public spaces, the message to African-Americans was much different.
- 22:52 Although the labor of African-Americans was significant to the growth of St. Petersburg, their presence was not wanted. As the black population grew, so did the enforcement of Jim Crow laws, racial and social segregation were strictly enforced and at one time, St. Petersburg was one of the most residentially segregated cities in the country. The benches were only for the enjoyment of white people. The benches were off limits to Africa-Americans as were most of the



recreational amenities. Lunch counters, theaters and in many instances, the public restrooms in places of business. In 1954, Dr. Robert Swain, Jr., a dentist, civil rights activist, civil leader, and owner of the Robert James Hotel in Methodist Town and other properties in the city challenged the redline policy which prevented African-Americans from living or operating businesses on the south side of 15th Avenue. Swain crossed the line and opened a dentist office and a small apartment building originally intended to house black baseball players on the southwest corner of 22nd Street and 15th Avenue South. The city initially refused to issue building permits, but backed down when Swain threatened to sue.

24:35 On November 30, 1955, the day before Rosa Parks effectively launched the Montgomery bus boycott, black leaders in St. Petersburg sued to integrate downtown's Spa Beach and Pool. The episode ignited more than a decade of spirited desegregation efforts, which included the picketing of segregated movie theaters, a strike by black sanitation workers and a suit against the city by black police officers for equal treatment.

25:03 Ralph M. Wimbish, physician, civil leader and civil rights activist served as president of the St. Petersburg chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, NAACP, during a time of strife, turmoil, and relentlessness in challenging the city's segregation laws. During the struggle for civil rights, Reverend Enoch Douglas Davis worked to end busing, school segregation and employee discrimination, to win voting rights for blacks, and to open the city's beaches and public pools to the black community. He also led his share of sit-ins at lunch counters and theaters. When the Freedom Riders came to Florida in the late 1950s to protest interstate segregation laws, Reverend Davis allowed them to stay in his home and to use the church as headquarters and with the help of his brother, the police, and several neighbors, he offered them protection from agitated segregationists. He earned several threats on his life for this and other civil rights work.

When black garbage workers marched during a 116-day strike against the city in 1968, Davis marched with them. His work in civil rights earned him 11 honors. Today, the Enoch Davis Center, a multi-purpose community center with a library and science center, a 250-seat auditorium, and office bears his name.

26:58 In St. Augustine, in 1964, black people tried to integrate a whites-only hotel by swimming in its pool. A dramatic news photo of the hotel owner dumping acid in the water horrified the nation and encouraged President Lyndon Johnson to sign the Civil Rights Act the next day. Even when laws changed, defacto segregation, discrimination, harassment and threatening behavior continued as common practice.

27:27 In 1965, black police officers were only allowed to patrol predominately black neighborhoods and had no authority to arrest white citizens. The Courageous Twelve were 12 of St. Petersburg's 15 black police officers who sued the city for



the right to patrol white communities and arrest white people the same as their white counterparts. Adam Baker, Freddie Crawford, Raymond DeLoach, Charles Holland, Leon Jackson, Jr., Robert Keys, Primus Killen, James King, Johnnie B. Lewis, Horace Nero, Jerry Styles, and Nathaniel Wooten.

On May 11, 1965, a year after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was signed into law, the group, led by Freddie Crawford and represented by Attorney James Sanderlin, filed a lawsuit against the city in federal court. On August 1, 1968, the officers won their case. Their courageous act opened the door for black police officers in this city and throughout the nation. As of 2020, Leon Jackson, Jr., the first black officer assigned to an all-white neighborhood is the last surviving member of the Courageous Twelve. A plaque in the group's honor hangs in the St. Petersburg police headquarters and soon a monument dedicated to them will be included in the makeover of the old headquarters.

- 29:19 Joseph E. Savage, a sanitation worker, spearheaded a movement leading 211 to 300 of his fellow workers to walk off their jobs in May 1968. This was just a little more than a month after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Dr. King was in Memphis to support and bring attention to a strike by more than 1300 of the city's sanitation workers. Dr. King's brother, Reverend A.D. King came to St. Petersburg in support of the workers here as did Reverend Ralph D. Abernathy. The strike, for better pay and working conditions, lasted 116 days, during which racial tensions exploded in various ways. The strike is seen as a milestone in local civil rights history. The following year, C. Bette Wimbish, the first black council member, was elected. And a few years later, James B. Sanderlin, the young lawyer who represented the striking workers, would be elected the first black judge in Pinellas County.

Combatting Racist Representation

- 30:57 In December of 1966, Joe Waller, later known as Omali Yeshitela, ripped a mural down from the walls of City Hall. He was arrested and his trial and appeals less than five years with his attorneys arguing all the way to the US Supreme Court.
- 31:13 The mural depicted a group of black troubadours, musicians, entertaining white picnickers at Pass-a-Grille Beach. The mural was a caricature of black people, depicting them with oversized heads and huge pink lips, grinning while strumming banjos. The mural was seen as racially offensive and denigrating by many in the black community. He served at least 22 months in prison and was ineligible to vote until his rights were restored in 2000. His action is seen by many to be the spark that reignited the civil rights movement in St. Petersburg. A plaque commemorating this action will be installed on the wall in City Hall where the mural once hung.
- 32:07 There is a history of misrepresentation, omission, and disrespect of black citizens in the mainstream white media. Across the country, black-owned newspapers were



created to give the community their own voice. In St. Petersburg, the Weekly Challenger newspaper has documented the rich and vibrant history of the African-American community for more than 50 years.

- 32:27 In 1967, Cleveland Johnson, founder and publisher of the paper bought what would become the Weekly Challenger from MC Fountain. Johnson expanded the paper from a few pages to 32, including eight pages in color and rebranded the paper to one with a primary focus of highlighting African-American news, both locally and nationally. The paper informed the black community of events related to the civil rights movement, school desegregation, as well as local events, church news, entertainment news, and news of the life and death of members of the local community. The legacy of the Weekly Challenger newspaper lives on and it holds a place of respect and honor in the hearts of many in the African-American community.

Sports and Desegregation

- 33:37 Communities have long rallied around sports and some believe that sports helped move us toward better race relations in the late 1960s and 70s.
- 33:46 On December 20, 1966, Gibbs High School basketball coach, Freddie Dyles, responded to a question about what he wished for Christmas by saying, an even break from area basketball officials. This was due to the unfair calls made by predominated white officials against his team. Gibbs defeated Pensacola, Escambia, and Boca Ciega on the way to the finals. During the game against Boca Ciega, a thief sneaked into the Gibbs Gladiator's dressing room at half time stealing money, class rings, and other valuables. Even with unfair calls and the theft of personal belongings, Gibbs went on to defeat Clearwater 70 to 66 in front of 7500 fans in what was called the greatest show on earth. It was the largest crowd to ever witness a Florida high school basketball game and the fans were not disappointed. They saw basketball at its best. 1966 was a year of history in Pinellas County. Gibbs High won the Florida Interscholastic Athletic Association state championship and advanced to the national tournament in Montgomery, Alabama where they won two games and lost one.

School Re-Segregation

- 35:19 One of the consequences of racially discriminatory mortgage lending, a practice known as redlining, is that American neighborhoods are deeply segregated by race as are the schools that serve them. From the outset, school desegregation was widely and bitterly opposed. Court ordered busing brought turmoil in 1971, but it also created the opportunity for friendships and a deeper understanding between races among students and team mates of that first generation of integration. Pinellas County schools and sports teams have begun to re-segregate into neighborhood groups since a judge ordered the end of busing in 2000.



Equity for All

36:07 Racism and racial discrimination is the most common obstacle to good health and good quality of life for residents in Pinellas County, but other types of discrimination such as gender, sexual expression, disability, age, and income also inflict harm and limit the potential of people who experience it. Our local history of civil rights leadership includes champions of these marginalized groups.

Disability Rights

36:42 Currently, 1 in 8 Americans experience a disability that effects mobility and millions more will face a short-term disability affecting mobility at some point in their lives. People experiencing disabilities often struggle to negotiate dangerous and inconvenient obstacles in the built environment.

37:00 George Locascio was stricken with polio in 1945 at the age of 19 while serving in the US Navy in the Philippines. He spent more than 30 years using a wheelchair or crutches. He knew what it was like to live with a disability. His best known fight was in 1988 when he battled the city and filed a lawsuit over inadequate seating for the disabled at what was then the Florida Suncoast Dome. The stadium only had 137 wheelchair spaces relegated to one floor. Federal guidelines require the stadium the size of the Dome to have at least 440 spaces in various areas throughout the facility. Locascio saw the Dome as another example of society's insensitivity to the disabled. The lawsuit was settled in 1990 resulting in additional wheelchair seating and improvements to the restroom and concession areas. In 2006, at the age of 80, Locascio was awarded a lifetime achievement award from Abilities, Inc. George Locascio died on December 5, 2009 at the age of 83.

38:28 The ADA was first introduced in Congress in 1988 and was signed into law by President George HW Bush on July 26, 1990. Long before that, in 1972, the city of St. Petersburg established the Committee to Advocate for Persons with Impairments to do just as the name applies. By 2003, the city of St. Petersburg had installed an estimated 4500 curb cuts to help people move easily from sidewalk to street, improving access to wheelchairs and improve the urban environment for all.

39:01 The disability rights movement started when people with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities began to challenge the system. It took years of organizing, filing lawsuits, testifying on the state and federal level, mailing, phone calls, letter writing and sometimes even getting arrested. The disability rights movement, like so many others, adopted many of the strategies of the civil rights movement.

A Hidden Minority



- 39:42 Homeless people are a hidden and often ignored minority in our society. Far from sharing in equity, they live on the streets, in cars, under bridges, in empty buildings, and within patches of dense brush on interstate rights of way. In 2007, St. Petersburg police slashed tents belonging to the homeless, citing their conditions as fire hazards. After the episode, a homeless advocacy group called St. Petersburg one of the nation's meanest cities. Also in 2007, Catholic Charities and governmental groups founded Pinellas Hope, a temporary shelter for people who have no place to live. It offered tents, apartments, cottages, meals, and counsel to help people become self-sufficient and enjoy a greater share of social equity. It has taken in many tens of thousands of people about half of whom move on to stable housing. In 2019, on a given night in Florida, 28328 people experienced homelessness.
- 40:42 An annual count turns up thousands of homeless adults, children, and families who don't have the money to pay market rents, secure subsidized housing or even access the limited number of temporary shelters or beds.
- 41:01 The current affordable housing crisis in Pinellas County does not bode well for the prospect of housing the homeless. Countywide housing research revealed that there has been a sharp decrease in new units of affordable housing, down from 401 new units in 2012 to only 86 units in 2016. It is estimated that there is a deficit of almost 20,000 housing units for extremely low income households countywide and that was before the COVID-19 crisis brought housing and security and homelessness to the doorsteps of thousands of working poor and middle class families.
- 41:35 This situation has become more acute due to COVID-19. The affordable and accessible housing crisis in Pinellas County must be a focus for health equity advocates as we confront this unacceptable situation in our community.

Advances for LGBTQ People

- 42:05 The Stonewall Uprising began on June 28, 1969 in response to a New York City police raid of the Stonewall Inn, a gay club in Greenwich Village. Fighting the oppression and taking queues from the civil rights movement, members of the LGBTQ community led a series of protests and demonstrations that lasted six days including a protest march with more than 2000 people. Largely credited as a turning point in the fight for LGBTQ rights, the Stonewall Uprising inspired more organized activism for LGBTQ equality and launched the modern day Pride movement.
- 42:40 Marsha P. Johnson was a black American, gay liberation activist and self-identified drag queen. Known as an outspoken advocate for gay rights, Johnson was one of the prominent figures in the Stonewall Uprising of 1969. Marsha disappeared on the eve of the gay pride parade in July 1992. Her body later surfaced in the Hudson



River. Law enforcement ruled it a suicide, but her friends believe she was murdered. Her murder remains unsolved.

- 43:09 In 1977, eight years after the Stonewall episode in New York City that launched the gay pride movement, Florida Citrus spokeswoman, Anita Bryant, waged an ongoing nationally publicized verbal war with gay people.
- 43:29 In St. Petersburg, police routinely harassed and arrested gay men in parks and other public spaces for suspected homosexual activity. As recently as the early 1980s, St. Petersburg undercover police routinely arrested gay men.
- 43:52 In 2003, the US Supreme Court struck down laws governing homosexuality making it legal in all 50 states. In 2015, the Court struck down the last state law banning same sex marriage, making marriage equality the law of the land. In the summer of 2020, the Supreme Court ruled that federal sex discrimination protection extended to LGBTQ people in the workplace. It protects employees from being terminated simply because of their gender identity or sexual orientation.
- 44:23 St. Petersburg hosts the largest annual pride parade and celebration in the southeast and is consistently named as one of the most LGBTQ-friendly cities in the region. The parade and celebration was founded in 2003 by a group that included Mark Bias, Carrie West, and Brian Longstreth. Mayor Rick Kriseman, then on the city council, was the only council member to sign it. Despite the progress made, LGBTQ people are not protected from housing discrimination in most states, including Florida nor is there federal or Florida law protecting LGBTQ employees from discrimination.
- 45:22 We hope you have been informed and inspired by these stories of people working to make Pinellas County and our world a more just and equitable place. It's important that we recognize those who came before us with a vision of a better, fairer society and the courage to challenge the status quo to achieve it. Their work can provide guidance and inspiration for the new chapters of change and progress that are being written by today's equity advocates.

There are many more accomplished people and rich histories that are not included here, but the story continues and you can help shape it. Do you have a story of social change or social movement that you are engaged in or that moves you? We are collecting ideas and stories. I would love to hear from you. Contact us at History@HealthyStPete.foundation.

Thank you for watching. Keep up the good fight.

