REPRESENTATION
Combatting Racist Representation

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:18   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.

:34   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.

1:27   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.

1:49   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.

Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg

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