

**Preserving and Sharing  
a Local African American Newspaper**

# **The Weekly Challenger**

*Digital African American Newspaper Archive  
& Research Guide*

*David Shedden*

*Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, USF St. Petersburg campus*

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# The Weekly Challenger

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VOLUME 36 NUMBER 4 OCTOBER 27 - NOVEMBER 2, 2005 25¢

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- THE LEADERSHIP DROUGHT, Part 1

## Remembering The Mother of Civil Rights Rosa Parks

February 4, 1913 - October 24, 2005

**Part Six  
The Leadership  
Drought- Part 1**

By Michael M. Connell  
Weekly Challenger Correspondent

Fifty years after Martin Luther King Jr. marched for equal justice across the nation, Black America is still fighting the same battles. While the nation has made progress in many areas, the struggle for equality remains. The leadership drought is a reality that must be addressed. The Weekly Challenger is proud to present this special series.

Rosa Parks was a woman of quiet strength and courage. She was a woman who stood up for her rights and for the rights of others. Her act of defiance on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, became a symbol of the civil rights movement. She was a woman who was not afraid to stand up to injustice. The Weekly Challenger is proud to present this special series.

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VOLUME 34 NUMBER 51

August 22 - 28, 2002

25¢

## CLEVELAND JOHNSON, THE PUBLISHER

Remembering Cleve Johnson



Always respectfully dressed, Mr. Cleveland Johnson's presence and voice was often larger than life to the community he so faithfully served.

Mr. Johnson's presence and voice was often larger than life to the community he so faithfully served. He was a man of many talents, a dedicated leader, and a true friend to all who knew him. His contributions to the community were countless, and his legacy will live on through the work of The Weekly Challenger.

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### The Weekly Challenger Salutes The Making Of Dr. King's National Memorial A Reality



### The King Monument, Historic Dedication



The Weekly Challenger salutes the making of Dr. King's National Memorial a reality. The monument is a testament to Dr. King's legacy and the power of non-violent resistance. It is a symbol of hope and a reminder of the work that still needs to be done to achieve true equality for all.

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# The Weekly Challenger

KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY



## The Weekly Challenger : 2005 : 10 : 27

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**Provenance**  
Donated and permissions granted by The Weekly Challenger to USFSP Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, Special Collections & University Archives on March 1, 2013

**Temporal Coverage**  
1967 - Present

Digital Archive



## Weekly Challenger African American Digital Newspaper Archive and Research Guide

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St. Petersburg African  
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### Introduction: Weekly Challenger Digital Newspaper Archive

# The Weekly Challenger

## KEEPING YOU CONNECTED TO YOUR COMMUNITY

*The Weekly Challenger* has documented the history of St. Petersburg's African American community since the newspaper was established by Cleveland Johnson Jr. in September 1967.

In 2013 an agreement between the USF Nelson Poynter Memorial Library and the Johnson family allowed the library to become the home for existing print issues of *The Weekly Challenger*. Since 2016 the library and newspaper have worked in partnership to create the [digital Weekly Challenger newspaper archive](#).

This research guide is part of the USF Libraries African American Experience in Florida (AAE) online portal.

- The Weekly Challenger website.
- "The Weekly Challenger turns 50!"

By Lyn Johnson, *The Weekly Challenger*, print edition, Sep. 21, 2017. (Posted online Sep. 22, 2017.)

Excerpt:

"Fifty years ago today, *The Weekly Challenger* came into existence. My father, Cleveland Johnson, Jr., borrowed \$40 from a friend to keep a months-old publication alive called the Weekly Challenge after the owner M.C. Fountain passed away. He added an 'r' and the rest is history."

### ST. PETERSBURG AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY RESOURCES

(This page includes recent local news coverage about Black Lives Matter protests.)

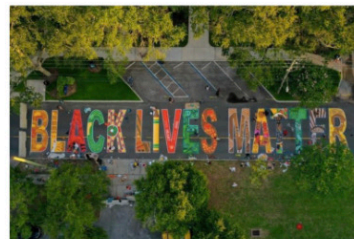


Photo courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg

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**CAMPBELL PARK NEIGHBORHOOD**

"[Campbell Park throughout the years.](#)"

By Jon Wilson, The Weekly Challenger, May 1, 2014.

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## St. Pete celebrates Juneteenth

June 25, 2020

955



*Photo courtesy of the City of St. Petersburg*



### Say Something!

July 18, 2020 · TWC



### Youth Farm continues to thrive

July 18, 2020 · TWC



### SPPD announced new response team to handle non-violent 911 calls

July 18, 2020 · TWC



### Business Spotlight: EmpowHERment

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### Fight, flight or freeze, part 1

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### Victoria Lawson goes on to glory

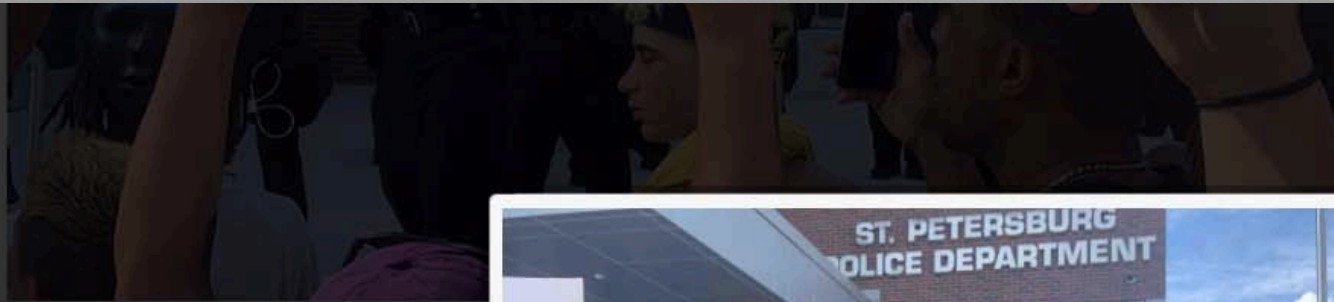
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### Mortgage Payment Assistance grant program

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By J.A. Jones, Staff Writer

ST. PETERSBURG — Like many cities across the country, St. Petersburg, Fla., was rocked Saturday, May 30, sparked by the police killing of George Floyd.

Daytime protests began peacefully on Saturday, but turned more confrontational as protesters gathered outside the police headquarters Saturday night, leading police to use tear gas.

That did not deter protesters, however. They returned to march and protest on Sunday and each day since. They have been met with various proclamations of support and or warnings against violence from city hall and the police department.

Over the last few days, St. Pete activists have experienced peaceful protests, while questioning police tactics.





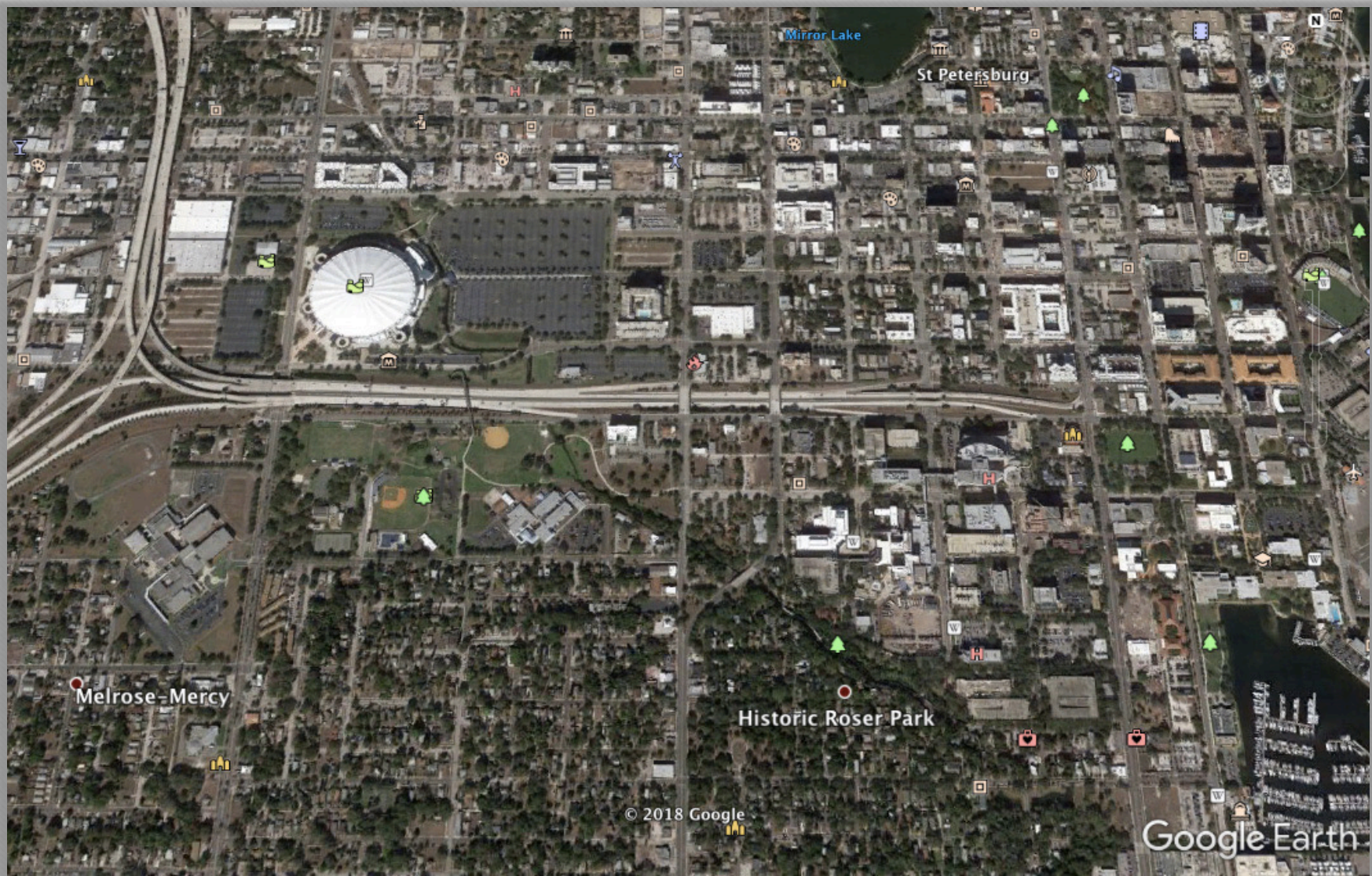


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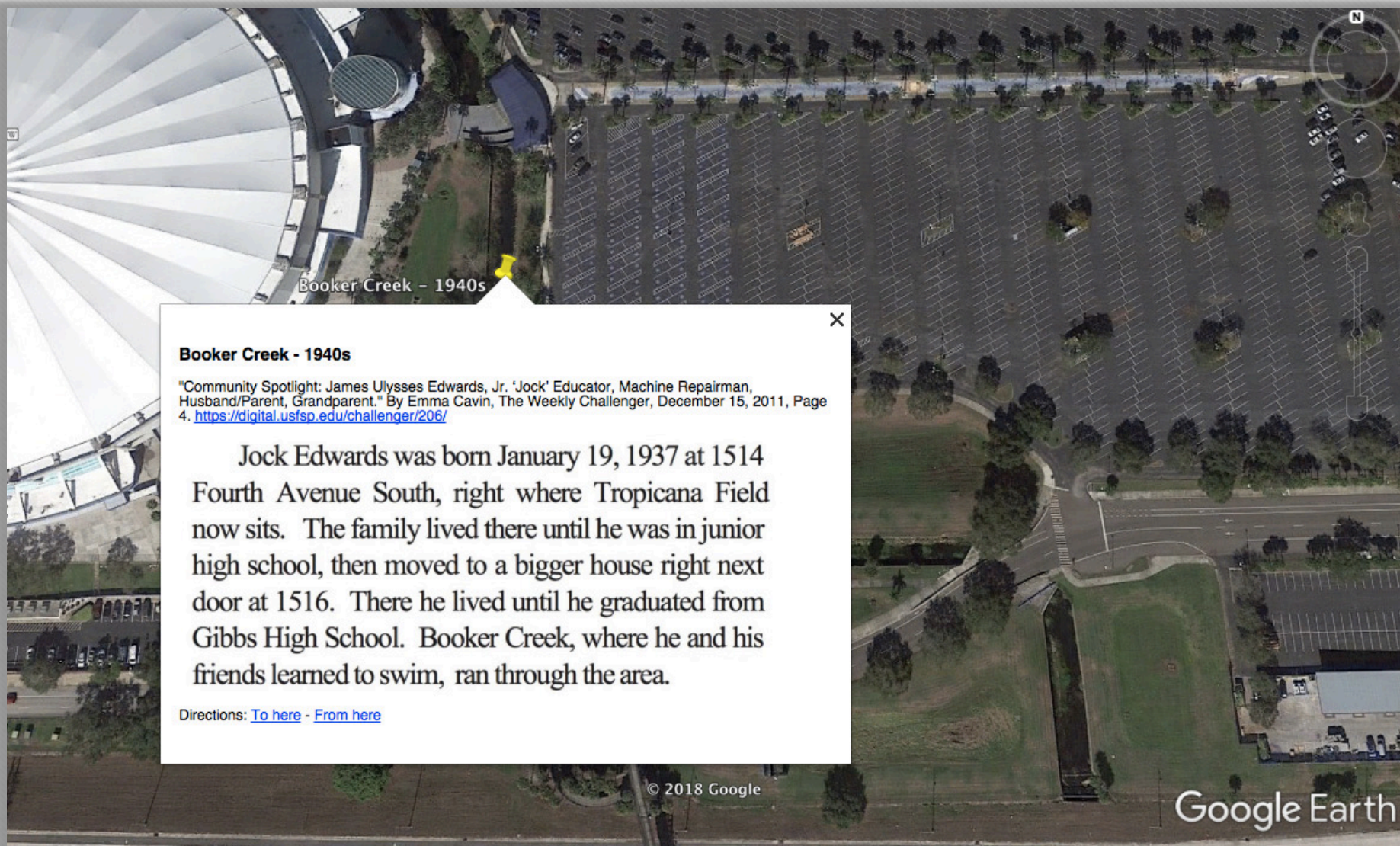
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Booker Creek - 1940s

#### Booker Creek - 1940s

"Community Spotlight: James Ulysses Edwards, Jr. 'Jock' Educator, Machine Repairman, Husband/Parent, Grandparent." By Emma Cavin, The Weekly Challenger, December 15, 2011, Page 4. <https://digital.usfsp.edu/challenger/206/>

Jock Edwards was born January 19, 1937 at 1514 Fourth Avenue South, right where Tropicana Field now sits. The family lived there until he was in junior high school, then moved to a bigger house right next door at 1516. There he lived until he graduated from Gibbs High School. Booker Creek, where he and his friends learned to swim, ran through the area.

Directions: [To here](#) - [From here](#)

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Google Earth



## City of St. Pete to honor Ray Charles and his song

ST. PETERSBURG — The City of St. Petersburg plans to declare Feb. 15 "Ray Charles Day" with a proclamation and a musical evening at The Suncoast Center.

A group of producers and local musicians will showcase the legacy of Ray Charles, whose first recorded song in 1957 was "The Suncoast Blues."

While that song, also called "I Met My Baby There," is no secret—you can find at least three versions on YouTube—it has been underappreciated as a musical icon of the city until now.

"It may be the biggest slow blues song ever recorded," said Ray Peter Clark, a writing teacher at the Poyner Institute, who has spent two years leading this effort. "He meets the girl of his dreams, right here in St. Pete, Florida."

Actually, he met the girl while he was still a teenager, living and working in Tampa. But when it came time to write the song, it sounded better with the name "St. Pete."

"Back then," said Clark, "Tampa may have gotten the airport, the university and the football stadium, but we got the song."

Although Ray Charles Robinson was born in Georgia and is associated with that state because of

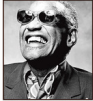
his classic rendition of "Georgia on My Mind," he was raised in the little north Florida town of Greenville. His formative years were difficult. The family was poor. His older brother drowned. Ray lost his vision.

He attended the St. Augustine School for the Blind, where he developed his musical skills. In his teenage years, he lived and worked across the state with gigs in Jacksonville, Orlando and then Tampa. There he was known as R.C. Robinson.

Into the 1950s and 60s, Ray Charles became one of America's most versatile performers, a singer, musician, composer, bandleader and arranger. Over time he became master of countless musical genres: gospel, jazz, rock, country, rhythm and blues, rockabilly, soul. His version of "America the Beautiful" has been applauded as our second National Anthem.

Over a half-century, Ray Charles often returned to Florida with many visits to St. Pete, including performances at the Manhattan Casino, a venue for black performers in the days of segregation, but also at the Suncoast Center and at an outdoor concert at Campbell Park.

"For all these reasons," reads the proclamation,



"we declare Ray Charles an Adopted Son of St. Petersburg, Florida, and his song an official song of the city."

Clark sees this, not as an end, but as a launch point of creativity for the city. "We are urging the celebration of Ray's life and work in images, texts and music, in museums, and in musical performances and festivals in his name and ours."

Speakers and performers will include author John Caposwa, Alex Harris and his band, The Scheffer Family, JJ Dattinich, Eric Deguano, Lilian Danks, Paul Wilborn, with a special guest appearance by soul artist Latimore.

Mark your calendars for St. Pete Celebrates the Florida legacy of The Genius Ray Charles Friday, Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. at The Suncoast Center, 650 First Ave. S. Tickets start at \$10. For more information, please call 727-865-6600.

## Ray Charles at the Manhattan Casino - July 5, 1957



### BLIND PIANIST HERE TODAY

A Suncoast favorite, Ray Charles, blind pianist from Chicago, will appear here at Manhattan Casino today. The noted pianist-vocalist has gained national fame since he released his first Atlantic record, "Don't You Know Baby?" about three years ago. Prior to entering the pop field about five years ago, Charles was an accompanist for a Chicago church choir. Some of his other top waxings include "Crying In My Own Tears," "I've Got A Woman," "Mary Ann" and "Lonely Woman." Dancing starts at 9 p.m.

(SCUA: St. Petersburg Times microfilm collection)

Directions: [To here](#) - [From here](#)

Casino - July 5, 1957

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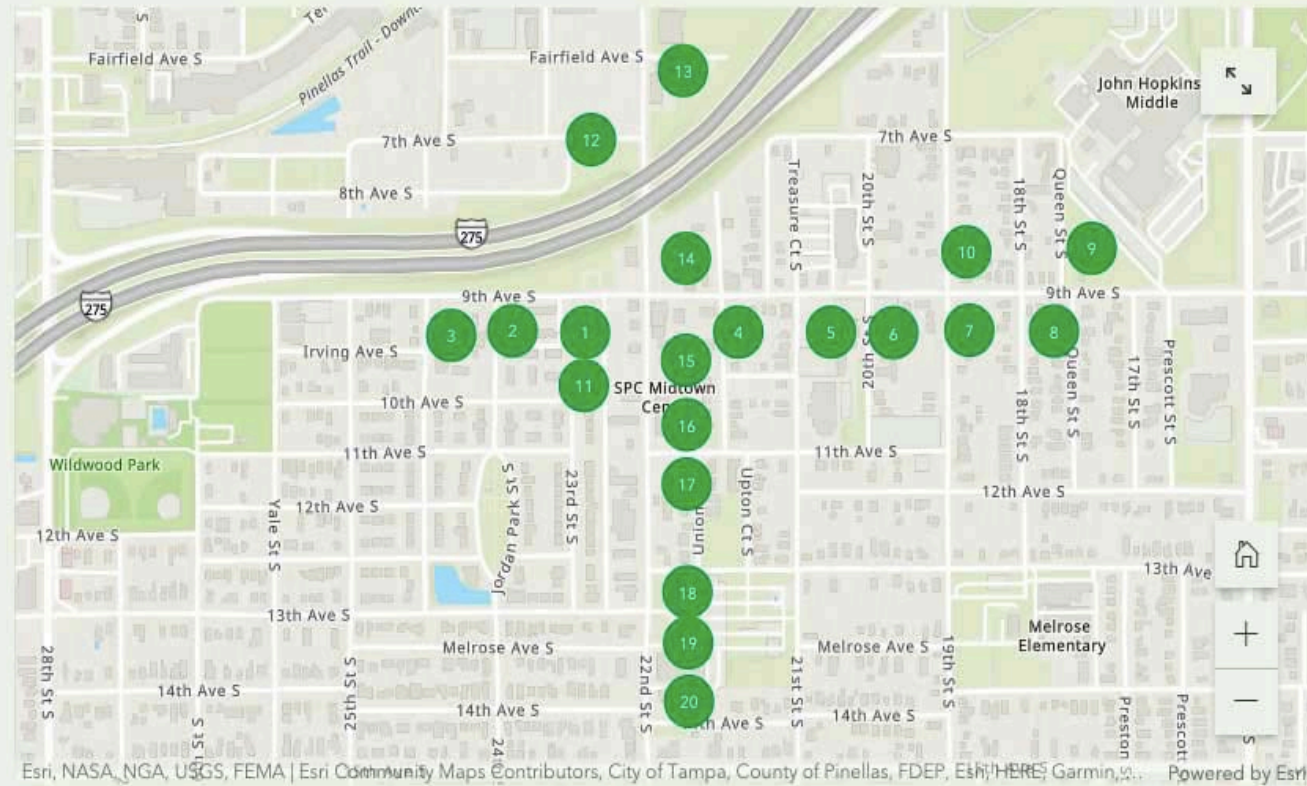
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VOL. 52 NO. 14

FEBRUARY 27 - MARCH 4, 2020

50¢



## COMMUNITY NEWS

The Weekly Challenger

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THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 27, 2020 9

### The Weekly Challenger inspires research guide on area black history

*HISTORY, from front page*

"What I like about *The Weekly Challenger* is they write history stories all the time," he said. "And that's great because we don't have the original stories about a lot of these events. So what I end up linking to is our stories from the present about old stories."

"I've been waiting for the past," he joked. But Shedden soon found the PDFs proved to be "a little cumbersome to use from a researching standpoint."

"When you scan the pictures or scan the newspapers, it doesn't always pick up all the words correctly, or if the ink wasn't printed right, it won't catch a word," he said. "Part of the guide is a way of trying to get around that."

Then, student questions led him to create an index. Shedden reasoned that students who don't know a lot about the Manhattan Casino or the Deuces wouldn't know where to find them in the chronology.

"Although (students) don't say it, I can see it in their eyes: 'Make my life as easy as possible,'" he said. "That's kind of what I see my mission as doing — taking this extraordinary archive, and then connecting it to other parts of its history."

"Ultimately, a newspaper is a collection of stories. And my job is to take those stories to help the students, but also connect them to other resources."

In the beginning, *The Weekly Challenger* served as the core of his research guide. But "Shedden wanted to expand beyond that."

"There are a lot of really good people doing good projects, but they're sort of doing them independently sometimes," he said. "So I'm also hoping with the guide to link to the various projects."

Now, the project includes books and resources from other local organizations and media outlets.

Students can broaden their research to include the black history of not only Tampa Bay, but also the state of Florida. They can browse relevant exhibits at the Dr. Carter G. Woodson African American Museum and the Florida Holocaust Museum. Or, they can explore the work of *The African American Heritage Association* of St. Petersburg, or the local chapter of the Association for the Study of African American Life and Art.

But Shedden doubts it will ever be finished. "I guess it's kind of like a recipe," he said. "I see an article and say, 'Oh, I don't have that in the index. I should have that.'"

Shedden is no stranger to chronicling the history of newspapers. Earlier this year, he published a chronology of Florida's papers from 1783 to 2001.

"This builds on my work that I did for the history of Florida newspapers, and I hope to revisit

that," he said. "This has also inspired me to look at the history of Florida African American newspapers more than I have. But it's hard because a lot of it hasn't been preserved."

*The Weekly Challenger* was founded by M.C. Fountain as *The Weekly Challenge* in 1967, after the then-St. Petersburg Times discontinued its embattled "Negro News" section.

"The African-American section was a segregated section which only was distributed in the black community. And it pains me that that took place," Shedden said. "However, if you look at the pages, they do exactly what *The Weekly Challenger* does — it brings a community together in conversation with itself on those pages."

Shortly thereafter, the paper was acquired by Cleveland Johnson, Jr., who renamed it *The Weekly Challenger*.

After Johnson's death in 2001, his wife, Ethel,



David Shedden, special collections librarian at Nelson Poynter Memorial Library, created the guide to connect students to other parts of history.

took on the role of CEO and publisher emerita, while their daughter, Lyn, became the publisher and general manager in 2012.

"*The Weekly Challenger* filled in an incredible need, but it has survived," Shedden said. "When I talk about newspapers as primary sources, I say, even if newspapers disappear in the future, you can't take away the important work that they've done before."

*The Weekly Challenger* inspires research guide on area black history



Cleveland Johnson, Jr., founder of *The Weekly Challenger*

BY EMILY WUNDERLICH  
Neighborhood News Bureau





The Weekly Challenger Newspaper



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and Family Fun Day

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VOLUME 36 NUMBER 4

OCTOBER 27 - NOVEMBER 2, 2005

25¢

## Remembering The Mother of Civil Rights Rosa Parks

February 4, 1913 - October 24, 2005

**Part Six  
The Leadership  
Drought- Part 1**



By Michael M. Connell  
Weekly Challenger Correspondent

Fifty years after Martin Luther King Jr. marched for equal justice across the nation, Black America is still fighting the same battles. While the nation has made progress in many areas, the struggle for equality remains. The leadership drought that has plagued the community since King's death is a major obstacle. We need new leaders who can inspire and guide the people towards a better future.



AP Photo

Rosa Parks was a quiet, determined woman who became a symbol of the civil rights movement. Her act of defiance on a Montgomery bus in 1955 led to the Montgomery Bus Boycott, a pivotal moment in the struggle for equality. Parks' courage and resilience inspired millions of people and paved the way for the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

**No Slowing These  
Tennis Fans**



Andre Agassi is a tennis legend who has won multiple Grand Slam titles. He is known for his powerful backhand and his charismatic personality on and off the court.

**CONSIDER ME!**



Consider Me! is a show where people share their unique talents and hobbies. It's a chance for everyone to shine and be recognized for their individuality.

**Courthouse Renamed  
For Black Man Who Won  
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A courthouse has been renamed in honor of a Black man who was the first to graduate from a law school. This is a significant milestone in the history of the legal profession and a testament to the man's achievements.

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# Questions ?

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