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Examination of Historical and Modern-Day Impact of Structural Racism on the Lives of Black People in the City of St. Petersburg, Florida

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**BUILDING BRIDGES &
SUPPORTING RACIAL EQUITY**
IN ST. PETERSBURG FLORIDA

Examination of Historical and Modern-Day Impact of Structural Racism on the Lives of Black
People in the City of St. Petersburg, Florida

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Foreword from Mayor Rick Kriseman and Deputy Mayor Dr. Kanika Tomalin

Our vision is clear: *“St. Petersburg will be a City of Opportunity where the sun shines on all who come to live, work and play. We will be an innovative, creative and competitive community that honors our past as we pursue our future.”*

Our City of Opportunity is built on a steadfast commitment to honor our shared past as we pursue our promising future. For a large segment of our community that means acknowledging the unfortunate truth that disadvantage was, and, in some cases remains, a systemized outcome for African Americans, fueled by oppression that defines day-to-day life in our city.

Before we can fully optimize the opportunities that wait to be realized in our city we must look back and document its full story, as it has unfolded for *all* of its residents. And, for those chapters known to include unacceptable policies, practices, decisions, and abuses of power that served to reinforce unequal treatment and inequitable outcomes for Black residents, we must be intentional and demonstrative in our current leadership about why and how such transgressions will not happen again. Our City must promise to equally provide and protect not only people of Color in our community, but everyone.

This is a special time in St. Petersburg, a time when equity is underscored as a communitywide priority across our private, public, and not-for-profit sectors. We are authoring a chapter in our city’s story that includes a celebration of diversity and the value that it brings to our neighborhoods, schools, churches, and shared spaces. This commitment to amplify equity in a way that reflects the value of every resident is being codified into our City’s charter, prescribed into our City’s policies and witnessed by our City’s partnerships and programs. This time will be remembered as one in which our long-held rhetoric was finally made real.

To do so, we must become pervasive in our equitable practices. The City commissioned this academic study to objectively document the history of systemic racism in our community. It lays bare its impacts, across systems and sectors, and recommends pathways to reconciliation and healing. As a community, let us take these steps together and continue on our city's journey toward our vision of being a City of Opportunity where our fabled sun truly shines on all.

Abstract

This report examines historical and modern-day impacts of structural racism on the lives of Black people in the City of St. Petersburg, Florida. It considers factors of structural racism that affect Black residents and communities in St. Petersburg related to the criminal legal system, economic system, education, and health. The report provides recommendations for policies and practices that can be implemented to address structural racism and promote racial equity in St. Petersburg. The report also identifies some additional areas of research needed for a more comprehensive analysis of issues related to structural racism.

Keywords: Structural Racism, Black Lives, Education, Health, Economics, Criminal-Legal

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Executive Summary

In the city of St. Petersburg, as in cities and jurisdictions throughout the United States, a history of pre-meditated and targeted policies and coordinated administrative actions have differentially impaired Black individuals and families throughout the past 125 years. These policies and actions led to major wealth and health disparities that continue to the current day. Collectively, this sweeping range of policies and actions, known as structural racism, has helped to ensure continued marginalization of Black citizens in St. Petersburg.

This report provides both historical detail and a set of new analyses documenting the broad impact of structural racism. It connects harmful policy decisions and city actions with differential, dire impacts on basic human dignities curtailing the fundamental rights of life, liberty and pursuit of happiness stipulated in the Declaration of Independence. With greater awareness and acceptance of the city's heart-rending history and lingering indifference concerning generational impacts of differential racist policymaking, intentional policies can be enacted which will safeguard overall health and well-being of this and future generations of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) citizens of St. Petersburg.

This report delineates a racial economic hierarchy rooted in the lower Pinellas Peninsula by 19th century settlers and city fathers. Unrest among White citizens and leaders in St. Petersburg dates to the late 1890s when several hundred African American laborers came to the area to complete the Orange Belt Railway. Black laborers settled in Cooper's Quarters, an area surrounding Ninth Street South (now Martin Luther King Blvd), later known as the Gas Plant area. In response to the influx of African Americans, racially biased police worked both independently and at times together with the Ku Klux Klan to visit racial terror upon Black residents. Black men were sent to "The Stockade" in the Gas Plant area near Third Avenue South

for even minor offenses, real or perceived. The campaign of racial terror was punctuated by public lynching of Black men between 1905 and 1924, cross burnings, regular ceremonies, and exchanges with law enforcement initiated by the Ku Klux Klan, and White mobs, including a Ku Klux Klan march through Black neighborhoods in 1937 to intimidate Black people from voting.

The report then documents decades of racist ideas and policies, guided by the premise of the inferiority of Black people, including adoption of a new city charter in 1931 “to establish and set apart in said city separate residential limits or districts for White and negro residents” (General Powers, ff) (St. Petersburg Times, February 14, 1931, Section 2, page 3). A charter clause banned White people from living or having a business in Black neighborhoods in St. Petersburg, at the time already one of the most segregated cities in the country, while forbidding Black people from doing the same in White neighborhoods. Indignities and restrictions placed on Black residents, from using public restrooms to sitting on the city’s signature green benches to trying on clothes in stores along Central Avenue, are detailed. City Council deliberations and votes addressed issues ranging from banning Negro orchestras from playing for dances attended by White people to a Negro bathing beach that caused consternation by White residents because use of the beach by Black residents required that Black families travel through some White areas. Though the St. Petersburg City Council declared all city-owned facilities and city employment open to all “regardless of race, Color or creed” (St. Petersburg Times, July 12, 1963, Section B, p.3), in July 1963, the theme of coordinated White mobs showing up publicly to City Council to interfere with or undermine advances affording equitable accessibility or easing burdens on Black citizens has remained a common thread in the 60 years since.

The report then provides new analyses of various data sources to examine continued differences between residents who are Black and residents who are White in terms of earned

income, home ownership, and experiences with the criminal-legal system. These newer analyses are preliminary and necessarily limited but are provided to demonstrate ways in which structural racism continues to exert modern-day effects. Data from the 2018 American Community Survey indicate significant differences in median earned income of St. Petersburg residents who are Black and those residents who are White. Specifically, the median earned income of residents who are non-Hispanic Black is only 73% of residents who are non-Hispanic White. More significantly, this difference remains even when normalized for educational attainment. Though additional education results in an increase in income, it does not eliminate the racial income gap. The median income of residents who are non-Hispanic Black with an associate degree is only 85% of that of non-Hispanic Whites. This same gap can be seen at all educational attainment levels. It is 87% for bachelor's degree holders, and 79% for those with an advanced degree. Moreover, except for education administration and teaching, this difference remains regardless of the degree field. A striking example is the median income of residents who are non-Hispanic Black with a bachelor's degree in business, which is only 67% of that of non-Hispanic Whites, and it is 75% for those with an advanced degree in business.

Similar legacies of historic racist policies can be seen when examining data for home ownership. Data from the Pinellas County Property Appraiser show that, in line with findings elsewhere, home ownership rates are significantly lower in St. Petersburg census tracts with a large percentage of Black residents than they are in census tracts with a large percentage of White residents. In census tracts with larger percentages of Black residents, both the value per square foot, as assessed by the County Property Appraiser, and the actual sales price per square foot of residential properties are among the lowest in St. Petersburg. Moreover, the percentage of sales in which the sales price is less than the assessed value is highest in the census tracts with a

higher percentage of Black residents. These data suggest that residential properties in primarily Black census tracts are undervalued by buyers.

Among the most stark and well-documented disparities are in the criminal/legal system data. Data from the Clerk of the Court show that, for most offenses that include a degree of discretion on the part of the law enforcement officer, the percentage of Black people charged far exceeds their percentage in St. Petersburg's general population. For example, while only 22% of St. Petersburg residents are Black, 74% of all St. Petersburg residents charged with "resisting arrest with violence" in 2020 and the first three months of 2021 were Black, as was 51% of the 1,028 residents charged with not carrying a license. Data show similar trends for many other charges that include officer discretion, a pattern that has continued to endure from all prior years.

Unequal access to quality education, food, housing, employment, healthcare, and other staples of a healthy life, shaped by the deliberate and differential distribution of money, power, and resources in St. Petersburg have culminated in tragic health disparities. The differential targeting of Black citizens over generations has been largely responsible for unfair, avoidable differences in health status between Black and White citizens. Infant mortality rates of Black infants have ranged from 2 to 5 times that of White infants in St. Petersburg and there has been no sustained narrowing of this gap despite awareness and medical concern. Moreover, the brain and biological systems of all adults are shaped during the earliest years of life, during which time Black children and their caregivers are faced daily with lingering effects of disparate and differential day-to-day adversity which insidiously corrode both psychological and physiological health. Over the course of the lifespan, a weathering effect is seen on health, culminating in a comprehensive array of preventable health disparities. Newer studies have identified disturbing evidence of poorer health and mortality outcomes for Black citizens at the hands of White health

professionals compared to Black health professionals. In St. Petersburg, data document gaps in life expectancy for Black and White citizens, reaching to well over a decade of life in certain areas of the city. Health data underscore most dramatically the scope of change still needed to redress social determinants of health.

Perceptions of racial inferiority and inequality continue to influence contemporary discussions and decisions made regarding equity. Structural racism imposes unique and substantial stressors on the daily lives of families raising young Black children, and significant adversity or trauma early in life impacts not only school readiness, but educational achievement and later economic productivity, and ultimately, results in higher rates of chronic physical and mental health problems across the lifespan. We are in an era where progress made through the passage of federal legislation has been challenged by a backlash regarding voting rights calculated to differentially impact Black citizens, evidenced by 389 restrictive bills introduced during the 2021 legislative sessions in 48 states, including Florida. Informed understanding of how structural racism has created, and systematically ensures continuation of, disparities in wealth, housing, education, financial security, physical and psychological safety, health, and mortality in St. Petersburg is the most consequential first step toward the comprehensive, measured, and deliberate policy decisions that can accelerate progress toward the promotion of equity.

Section 1. Introduction

Structural racism is an institutional system that perpetuates inequality, disparities, and injustices within a community. It affects the community via multiple facets that social institutions and infrastructures preserve. According to Egede and Walker (2020):

Structural racism exists because discriminatory practices in one sector reinforce parallel practices in other sectors, creating interconnected systems that embed inequities in laws and policies. Consequently, education, employment, housing, credit markets, health care, and the justice system mutually reinforce practices that allow or encourage discriminatory beliefs, stereotypes, and unequal distribution of resources. (p. 1)

Structural racism also limits individuals' opportunities to excel or reposition themselves to achieve their desired advancement (Chetty et al., 2020; Myrdal, 1944; Yearby, 2020; Yearby & Mohapatra, 2021). Thus, in documenting structural racism, consideration should be given to policies and practices that contribute to inequities. This report documents the impact of structural racism on Black lives in St. Petersburg, Florida, from the arrival of John Donaldson in 1868 to the present. The primary goals of this report are as follows:

- Provide both a historical overview and a snapshot of current data trends that illustrate ways in which structural racism affects aspects of Black life and the thriving of communities in the city of St Petersburg.
- Provide recommendations for updated or new policies and practices that may help to dismantle structural racism in the city.
- Identify additional facets of structural racism impacting the Black residents and communities in St. Petersburg that need further research, documentation, and funding to better understand and meaningfully address these additional facets.

This report is organized into seven sections. Section I introduces the study and operationalizes terms and definitions. Section II describes relevant literature on structural racism pertinent to the criminal-legal, economic, health, and education systems. Section III describes the methodological approach employed to analyze the data. Section IV summarizes the study's findings relative to the historical and modern-day impact of structural racism on the lives of Black people in St. Petersburg. Section V identifies facets of structural racism that need to be further researched. Section VI provides recommendations regarding actions that can be taken to help address structural racism in the city of St Petersburg. Section VII comments on implications of the study and offers concluding summary remarks.

Operational Definitions

The following are operational definitions for terms that are integral to this report.

- **Black or African American.** This report adheres to the U.S. Census Bureau definition for a Black or African American person. It states, “A person having origins in any of the Black racial groups of Africa” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).
- **White.** This report adheres to the U.S. Census Bureau definition for a White person. It states, “A person having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa” (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).
- **Structural racism.** According to the Aspen Institute (2017), structural racism is “a system in which public policies, institutional practices, cultural representations, and other norms work in various, often reinforcing ways to perpetuate racial group inequity. It identifies dimensions of our history and culture that have allowed privileges associated with ‘Whiteness’ and disadvantages associated with

‘color’ to endure and adapt over time. Structural racism is not something that a few people or institutions choose to practice. Instead, it has been a feature of the social, economic and political systems in which we all exist”

(<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/files/content/docs/rcc/RCC-Structural-Racism-Glossary.pdf>).

- **Social determinants of health.** According to Healthy People (2020) “Social determinants of health are conditions in the environments in which people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks". Thus, health is impacted by conditions in which an individual works and lives, and by social and economic resources, and by other opportunities an individual is afforded (Braveman et al., 2011). It is more customary to focus in on more immediate or proximal causes of individual health outcomes, factors that are referred to as “downstream” social determinants of health; these are factors “temporally and spatially close to health effects (and hence relatively apparent) but influenced by upstream factors” (Braveman et al., 2011, p. 383). Less customary is to consider how “upstream” social determinants of health factors, including structural racism, “set in motion causal pathways leading to (often temporally and spatially distant) health effects through downstream factors” (Braveman et al., 2011, p. 383).

Section II. Relevant Literature

Since the arrival, in late August 1619, of people of African descent to the land now known as the United States of America (USA), to the present time, there remain deeply entrenched racial inequities and discriminatory practices in all areas of Black life (Hardeman et al., 2021; Joseph, 2020; Smedley & Smedley, 2018; Sitkoff & Foner, 1993). Progress has been made through the passage of legislation (Civil Rights Act of 1964, Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010, to name a few) and court rulings. Nevertheless, this progress is often challenged, neutralized, or undermined, as evidenced by the 389 bills with restrictive provisions introduced in 48 states during the 2021 legislative sessions (Brenner Center for Justice, 2021).

Anti-Black racism, a “system of beliefs and practices that attack, erode, and limit the humanity of Black people” (Carruthers, 2018, p. 26), is embedded in the fabric of the United States. Even as the founding fathers were declaring independence, they debated issues regarding people of African descent. They developed racist ideas and policies, including the inferiority of Black people, that remain entrenched in society. Whether in employment, housing, economic opportunity, health, education, incarceration rates, the death penalty, felony disenfranchisement, and any of the social determinants of health, or just living from day-to-day, Black people have experienced and continue to experience anti-Black racism resulting in disparities in our currently racialized society.

Racial inferiority and inequality were the justification for the enslavement of Black people and these notions continue to influence contemporary discussions regarding equity (Menchaca, 1997). Ibram X. Kendi (2016) noted, “racial discrimination led to racist ideas which led to ignorance and hate. This is the causal relationship driving America’s history of race

relations” (p. 9). Kendi continued that those embracing racist ideologies dismiss or ignore the foundations on which they were built including systemic policies of enslavement, oppression, and confinement. Any attempts to tear down structural racism must take stock of and confront these systems.

Structural racism impacts individuals across multiple institutions. It is operationalized through laws, policies and practices that limit individuals' opportunities. According to Powell (2008),

From a structural perspective, causation is understood as cumulative within and across domains. It is a product of reciprocal and mutual interaction within and between institutions. Institutional racism shifts our focus from the motives of individual people to practices and procedures within an institution. Structural racism shifts our attention from the single, intra-institutional setting to inter-institutional arrangements and interactions. Efforts to identify causation at a particular moment of decision within a specific domain understate the cumulative effects of discrimination. (p. 796)

This notion of cumulative impact is an important one. Yearby and Mohapatra (2021) explain ways in which structural racism is deeply rooted in society and inscribed into policy and legal formulation. Ensuing policies and laws, when biased at their base, can deprive racial and ethnic minorities of opportunity and resources compared to other groups. When examining structural racism, it can be particularly useful to focus on inter-institutional arrangements and to consider enforced laws that historically and presently contribute to disparities in opportunities and to differential resource allocations afforded marginalized populations. Thus, in examining structural racism within the St. Petersburg, Florida, community, this report will consider where relevant inter-institutional arrangements among criminal-legal, economic, education, and health systems.

Criminal-Legal System

Structural racism is evident in the criminal-legal system (Mesic et al., 2018). Data trends suggest that Black are incarcerated at higher rates than their White counterparts (Delaney et al., 2021; Mauer & King, 2007). Further, there is a disproportionate concentration of incarcerated low-skilled Black men with limited educational attainment (Ewert et al., 2014). Historically, Black people were subjected to brutal forms of policing and murders, including lynching. These were among the forms of terror differentially used as disciplinary and control devices against Blacks (Myrdal, 1944; Clarke, 1998). According to the Equal Justice Initiative (2021), a fundamental belief that Black and Brown people are prone to crime and inherently dangerous remains today and continues to drive inequitable policies leading to excessive sentencing, mass incarceration, and execution.

Incarceration has long-term consequences and can impact individuals' credit ratings, future job opportunities, access to housing (Garcia-Perez et al., 2020), and overall well-being (Blankenship et al., 2018). Furthermore, individuals' failure to pay fees and fines can result in occupational and driver's license suspensions, public benefits restrictions, and repeat incarceration (Colgan, 2018). In response, individuals desperately seeking to avoid repercussions for not paying economic sanctions often forego basic needs, such as housing, food, and medication and end up in 'a debtor's prison' (Colgan, 2018). In these ways, incarceration and economic sanctions have repercussions far beyond the criminal-legal system.

Police involved shootings also reflect disparities relative to race (Scott et al., 2017). The state racism index, which is a predictor for Black-White disparities in the rate of police shootings, includes a disparity ratio of police shootings of potentially unarmed individuals – a rate which increases by 24% for every 10-point increase of the index (Mesic et al., 2018). There

have been recent calls to unpack existing data regarding officers involved in shootings to gain a clearer read on trends (Knox & Mumulo, 2020). There have also been recommendations to create a national database documenting every incident of police firing guns at citizens (Tregle et al., 2019), to solidify understanding of trends and means of intervening to effectively address and erase racial disparities.

Economic System

Structural racism impacts economics at the individual and community levels. Economic disparities can have lasting negative effects on Black families impacting the ability to purchase homes, employment options, initiate business ventures, and prioritized expenses (Minzner, 2020). The economic system has benefited the white community in St Petersburg based on biased law-making and day-to-day practices at the national and local levels. This includes:

- **Federal Housing Act** in 1934 and the creation of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation in 1933 which provided the foundational legislation and administrative apparatus that generated redlining and racially segregated communities and disparities in housing values and home ownership.
- **Servicemen's Readjustment Act (also known as the GI Bill) of 1944**, signed into law by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, provided federal assistance to veterans in the form of housing, unemployment and educational benefits. However, politicians designed the distribution of benefits to limit options for Black service members.
- **Social Security Act 1935**The policy was intended to protect families from loss of income due to the death or disability of a primary breadwinner as a result of work related incidents, and to offer assistance via public welfare. However, because of

longstanding discrimination in employment Black workers were often paid in cash or “off-the-books” making them ineligible for these social insurance programs.

- **Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938**

When the Federal minimum wage was established under the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, it purposely excluded many African American workers. Agriculture and most service workers, who are predominantly African American, were exempted from labor law protections.

- **Jim Crow Laws**

Jim Crow laws were a collection of state and local statutes that legalized racial segregation. African Americans were denied the right to vote, hold jobs, get an education or other opportunities. Those who attempted to defy Jim Crow laws often faced arrest, fines, jail sentences, violence, and death.

Furthermore, the systems and laws that limited opportunity for Black people also extend to the efforts to expand the economy in St Petersburg and across the country. Economic development efforts, designed to expand the local and regional economies and positively impact everyone within that geography, have benefited White people disproportionately. Even while cities and counties have made substantial investments in traditional economic development (e.g., business recruitment, infrastructure investments, and downtown revitalization), wealth disparities persist.

In most cases, the goal of these efforts has been to improve a city or neighborhood’s overall prosperity without considering who specifically would benefit or be harmed. Without an intentional focus on who benefits, though, these investments have gone to those best prepared or

best capitalized to take advantage (Benner & Pastor, 2013; Berube & Murray, 2018; Johnson, 2016; Rothstein, 2018). For example, small business loans have gone to those with existing banking relationships (Simon, 2020), recruited businesses rarely employed neighborhood residents, and facade improvement grants went to those with sufficient resources to contribute the needed financial match. Therefore, the legacy of systemic racism in the United States (i.e., discriminatory lending practices, redlining, and lack of municipal investments in communities of color) increased the likelihood that those who benefitted were White and not people of color.

These historic and current realities result in a significant difference in wealth between White and Black families. “In the 2019 survey, White families have the highest level of both median and mean family wealth: \$188,200 and \$983,400, respectively...Black and Hispanic families have considerably less wealth. Black families' median and mean wealth is less than 15 percent that of White families, at \$24,100 and \$142,500, respectively.” (Bhutta et al., 2020, <https://www.federalreserve.gov/econres/notes/feds-notes/disparities-in-wealth-by-race-and-ethnicity-in-the-2019-survey-of-consumer-finances-20200928.htm>).

Housing

Homeownership is a pathway to generate generational wealth. According to Glover (2021), Black homeownership lags across the country, with only 44% of Blacks owning their home in 2020 compared to 74% of White Americans. Numerous reports confirm that homeownership for Blacks remains at a lower rate (Citi Global Perspectives and Solutions (Citi GPS), 2020; Garriga et al., 2017).

Unfair mortgage practices are rampant in Black neighborhoods. For instance, SunTrust, Wells Fargo, and Countrywide have exhibited discriminatory practices that negatively impact Black borrowers (Rice & Swesnik, 2013). The economic disparities resulting from structural

racism suppress Black homeownership. For example, potential borrowers lack the financial and other qualifications for mortgage loans, and Blacks are rejected for mortgage loans at a rate three times higher than non-Black individuals (Citi GPS, 2020; Glantz & Martinez, 2018; Liu et al., 2020). Blacks are also denied at higher rates for conventional, nonconventional, and refinance loans (Citi GPS, 2020; Liu et al., 2020). Since credit reports are among the top reasons for the denial of loans (Liu et al., 2020; Rice & Swesnik, 2013), it is relevant that credit scores have biased algorithms that decrease the credit rating of Black borrowers (Glantz & Martinez, 2018; Rice & Swesnik, 2013).

Perry et al. (2018) noted that property appraisals and the equity in Black-owned homes are often assessed at a lower value when compared to White-owned homes, a pattern that may be influenced by and reflect bias, such as a belief that children residing in devalued neighborhoods in segregated metropolitan areas have less chance at upward mobility. Furthermore, homes in majority-Black neighborhoods were valued at 23% less when compared to areas with few, if any, Black residents (Perry et al., 2018). Yearby (2018) suggested that one means of addressing structural racism relative to housing would be targeting grants to revitalize Black neighborhoods. This might be expected, in turn, to lower crime rates, pollution, noise levels, and overcrowding.

Employment and Compensation

Structural racism impacts economic development (inclusive of business opportunities, housing, transportation, etc.). Employment contributes positively to economic development through jobs that are profitable, enjoyable, and provide opportunities for advancement. However, opportunities for representation and sustained employment within various sectors can vary. For instance, despite increases in recruitment efforts for minority teachers in education, turnover rates for minority teachers are higher than those of their White peers, due in part to poorer

working conditions (Ingersoll et al., 2019). One telling statistic is that since the existence of the federal financial regulatory agency, only 3% of financial regulators have been Black (Brummer, 2020). Improved efforts and successes in recruiting individuals of Color to professional careers and retain them are needed.

Unemployment data echo these concerns. The Equity Profile of Pinellas County (UNITE Pinellas, PolicyLink & PERE, 2019) indicates an unemployment rate for White residents of 6% compared to a rate of 10% for Black residents. Job displacement also more frequently impacts Black workers than their White counterparts (Wrigley-Field & Seltzer, 2020). Analyses suggest that Blacks are more likely to lose their jobs or to leave lower-risk non-frontline positions (Gemelas et al., 2021). An additional concern is that Black workers' unemployment may more often be a result of transportation constraints (Tyndall, 2017).

These concerns combine to contribute to wealth gaps, and remedial efforts need to transcend neighborhood boundaries and class lines, while focusing on improving upward mobility (Chetty et al., 2020; Urban Institute, 2020). Unfortunately, compensation disparities hinder upward mobility, and such disparities also exist. According to a 2019 Equity Profile of Pinellas County (UNITE Pinellas, PolicyLink & PERE, 2019), the median hourly wage for a White person in the county in 2016 was \$20.20, while the average wage for a Black person was \$14.80. Thus, for a 40-hour week, a White person earns an average of \$216 more than a Black person. Multiplied by 52 weeks (a year), the result is a wage difference of \$10,800. This difference in income aligns with national trends. Even when poor households of varied race are compared, Blacks and Hispanics had a neighborhood median income that was about two-thirds that of Whites and Asians (Reardon et al., 2015).

While Bradford (2014) has highlighted entrepreneurial opportunities for Blacks as one path to potentially reducing Black-White wealth gaps, Yearby (2018) outlined how government entities can also address structural racism in employment by more systematically enforcing laws that promote civil rights relative to wage and hiring discriminatory practices. One concrete step forward may be requiring companies to publicly report data on their hiring and pay information, disaggregating data by gender and race.

Education

Education can shape and advance society. Education can promote economic opportunities, improve quality of life, and reduce health disparities. The impact of education spans the K-16 learning environments and influences community norms and culture. Yet history documents laws and policies that were strategically used to restrict educational opportunities for Blacks (Blaisdell, 2016; McGee, 2020; Powell, 2008; Schnur, 1991). For instance, cases such as *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), *Patterson v. Taylor* (1906), and *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) exposed how segregated education and transportation result in unequal opportunities for Blacks.

Some schools are still segregated, and integration efforts have progressed at a slower rate (Frankenberg, 2019). Schools serving primarily Black students continue to face struggles in providing adequate resources, keeping qualified teachers, and ensuring students demonstrate proficiency on assessment at the state and national level (Moore, 2021, Taylor & Frankenberg, 2009; Wald & Losen, 2003). Commensurately, Black students in K-12 settings continue to be singled out at higher rate for suspensions, harsher school sanctions, and marginalization within school settings (Tampa Bay Times, 2015; Wald & Losen, 2003). This disturbing trend begins before children even reach the school system. Gilliam (2015) reported that nationally, 6.67

preschoolers were expelled per 1,000 enrolled, a rate 3.2 times the rate for K-12 students; rates are highest for African Americans, with boys over 4½ times more likely to be expelled than girls. Expulsion rates were the highest in faith-affiliated centers and in for-profit childcare (Gilliam, 2015).

At the tertiary level, discrimination has also existed in decisions regarding who gains acceptance into various programs (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Hutcheson et al., 2011). Blacks' acceptance rates into STEM fields, medical programs, and law have historically been lower than those of their White counterparts (Burke, 2020; Cohen & Kisker, 2010; McGee, 2020; Schnur, 1991; Walter & Johnson-Austin, 2012). In these ways, structural racism within educational systems begins very early on, has been documented across the educational spectrum, erects barriers and most importantly, has repercussions on Black students' future career trajectories.

The national trends of educational disparities have been well-documented in Pinellas County. A class-action lawsuit (Bradley v. The Pinellas County School Board) outlined how the School Board had denied Black students a quality education, prompting coordinated action (Sibley Dolman Gipe, 2017). In 2015, five majority Black schools (Campbell Park, Fairmount Park, Lakewood, Maximo, and Melrose) were flagged as being regularly among the lowest-performing schools in Florida, and were notoriously labeled "Failure Factories" (<https://projects.tampabay.com/projects/2015/investigations/pinellas-failure-factories/>) (Tampa Bay Times, 2015).

Several strategies for addressing disparities in education have been identified, including Assari and Caldwell's (2018) call to increase the diversity of teachers and to allocate funding to provide training on bias, racism, microaggression, prejudice, and inequalities. Others have proposed additional ideas, such as integration of the arts into the curriculum to improve students'

academic performance, motivate, and engage them in learning various content, develop social competencies and skills, and promote thinking and problem-solving skills (Carney et al., 2016; Parkinson, 2017).

Health

Health outcomes are a consequence of structural factors such as wealth, income inequality, and access to education (Viner et al., 2012), and multiple social determinants of health differentially impact Black individuals and communities (Braveman et al., 2011). Among the more commonly identified social, economic and environmental determinants are availability of resources to meet daily needs (e.g., safe and affordable housing, healthy food), access to educational, economic, and job opportunities, social support, neighborhood and community safety, and clean air and water. Moreover, economic, housing, labor, transportation, educational and criminal-legal disparities not only operate independently to differentially impact Black communities and neighborhoods, but they also intersect to have combinative influence and exert ripple effects that influence Black citizens' health and wellbeing throughout life (Paradies, 2006).

While the stresses of structural racism have deep historical roots, they also play out in everyday devaluing, disempowerment, and differential allocation of valued societal resources and opportunities to Black men, women, and children (Braverman & Gottlieb, 2014). These stresses can trigger a chain of biological processes, referred to as weathering, that weakens both physical and mental health (Geronimus et al., 2006). Weathering starts early in life and continues to exert a deleterious effect on health throughout the adult years (Simons et al., 2018). Data indicate that differential health outcomes are present even prenatally and in the newborn period (CDC, 2016), and that the health and life expectancy of Black individuals are adversely

influenced by a cumulative experience of racism throughout the life course (Paradies, 2006; Phelan & Link, 2015).

Structural racism has also impacted the healthcare of individuals and the support for families (Bailey et al., 2017; Smedley et al., 2002; Wrigley-Field et al, 2021; Yearby, 2018). Blacks have disproportionately higher morbidity and mortality rates (Gee & Ford, 2011; National Center for Health Statistics, 2017) and unequal access to medical care (Garcia et al., 2020; Mayberry et al., 2000). Disparities between racial groups exist for hypertension, breast cancer, diabetes, high blood pressure, substance use, cardiovascular health, and cancer diagnosis (D. R. Williams & Mohammed, 2009; Khan et al., 2014; Mayberry et al., 2000; Smedley et al., 2002). Randall (2006) outlines a case wherein disparities trace back to a lack of health care provided from slavery through the reconstruction period, Jim Crow laws, and the Civil Rights movement, into the present. Today, while most hospitals are desegregated as a result of Title VI, loopholes in laws and unchecked unconscious bias can still lead physicians to discriminate in their practices relative to race (Yearby, 2018). The most recent disparities documented during the COVID-19 pandemic show Blacks to have disproportionately higher rates of infection and death (Laurencin & McClinton, 2020; Tan et al., 2021).

Elevated stress levels, depression, and psychological factors are all associated with inequities. Inequities in healthcare treatment can contribute to psychological distress (Assari, Lankarani, & Caldwell, 2017; Schmitt et al., 2014); to an increase in depression and anxiety (Assari et al., 2015; Assari, Lankarani. & Caldwell, 2017; Assari, Moazen-Zadeh et al., 2017; Himmelstein et al., 2015); and to an increase of disturbed eating and obesity (Assari, 2008a). Individuals' quality of life and life expectancy also decrease when there is poor healthcare treatment and mistreatment, which itself impacts psychological wellness (Schmitt et al., 2014).

It has become increasingly clear that early childhood, childhood, and adolescent experiences are pivotally important. Brain science now indicates that between 80-85% of the brain's development has been completed by the age of 3 (Gilmore et al., 2007; Nowakowski, 2006; Rakic, 2006). During the pregnancy, infant and toddler years, developing brains are being wired -- in a moment-to-moment, hour-by-hour, day-by-day "real time" manner -- by the social experiences babies are having with other people around them (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child, 2020). This is for the good when infants are experiencing safety, security, predictability, and relative calm. By contrast, experiencing adverse environments has very different enduring consequences. The impact on the lifelong brain-behavior connections will be guided by the individual's hard-wired stress response system (in particular, the hypothalamic-pituitary axis) that is being built during the first 18 months of life (National Scientific Council on the Developing child, 2007). It can hence be detrimental when infants' and toddlers' day-to-day social exchanges and interactions at home, in their childcare centers, and in their neighborhoods and community are compromised by stress, chronic adversity, and/or trauma - including adversity experienced by those adults caring for them.

One of the most remarkable statistics highlighting the stresses that can come from the stresses and indignities of culturally based racism is that health disparities can be documented at all levels of socioeconomic standing and education (Braveman et al., 2011). Evidence is clear that Black men have poorer health than other groups when they are not educated, but even among middle-class educated Black men and women, health outcomes do not reach par with those of White men (Olshansky et al., 2012). For example, whereas the life expectancy for White men with the most education is 12.9 years longer than for White men with the least education, among Black men, the difference between most and least educated is only 9.7 years (Olshansky

et al., 2012). Moreover, Black-White disparities in health and mortality can be seen at all ages from twenty through eighty (Olshansky et al., 2012). Hence, even if able to improve their educational and socioeconomic standing, Black men do not receive the same degree of protective health boost as do White men, for Black men continue to be vulnerable to the pervasive stressful influence and incidence of racism.

Black women are similarly impacted (Olshansky et al., 2012); they die earlier too and are also less likely to receive even routine medical procedures than are White women (Howell et al., 2016; Prather et al., 2018). In the analysis provided by Simons et al. (2018), “Black women are especially vulnerable to weathering effects when high rates of male unemployment and incarceration in the community thrust them into a role of supporting multiple generations of dependents but with resources only accessible from low-income jobs” (Simons, et al, 2018, p.1997). Other data show that Black women are four to five times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth than White women, regardless of income, education, or lifestyle (Bingham et al., 2011; Bond, 2011). Nationally, there are 40.8 pregnancy related deaths per 100,000 live births for Black women and 12.7 per 100,000 for White women (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019). Clearly, the burdens of structural racism affect Black citizens' health and contribute to early mortality in ways never felt by White citizens (Gee & Ford, 2011; Hardeman et al., 2016; Neblett, 2019).

Differences in health between Black and White citizens cannot simply be explained by genetic susceptibility or written off to poor behavioral habits (Kuzawa & Sweet, 2009; Landecker & Panofsky, 2013), though certainly health is adversely affected by such factors as food deserts and lack of accessibility to fresh food. Comparisons of Black immigrants with those born and raised in the U.S. help shed light on the insidious weathering effects of being Black in

the United States from birth. Though as a group, immigrants are in better health upon arrival in the U.S. than are their American counterparts, this foreign-born health advantage erodes over time for most immigrant groups (Engelman & Ye, 2019). However, the pattern is different for Black foreign-born immigrants (Antecol & Bedard, 2006). Whereas assimilation toward U.S. levels eventually erases most to all of the initial health advantage shown by Hispanic and (depending on the health measure) white immigrants, it does not eliminate the gap for Black immigrant men or women (Antecol & Bedard, 2006; Engelman & Ye, 2019).

Such data underscore that health patterns do not simply arise from different biological endowments or behavioral choices. They reflect biological consequences of chronic exposure to racial discrimination, economic deprivation, and social marginalization among communities of color (Williams & Sternthal, 2010; Paradies, 2006; Phelan & Link, 2015) in line with those chronicled throughout this report. The weathering effect of being Black in America from birth draws stark attention to the work that lies ahead to address inequities and eliminate the health impact of structural racism (Geronimus et al., 2006).

There are other important considerations that further amplify health equity issues. Access to health insurance is disproportionate relative to racial groups. The Equity Profile of Pinellas County (UNITE Pinellas, PolicyLink and PERE, 2019) indicated that for individuals 26 years of age and older, 88% of White people had health insurance, compared to 81% of Black people. That same report noted that Black people were more likely to hold public health insurance than White people. This circumstance in turn leads to disproportionate access to health care options, which can significantly impact individuals' overall wellness.

Conditions are also complicated by a deep mistrust of healthcare held by Black Americans (Boulware et al., 2003). Incredibly, systematic documentation of excess death among

Black Americans (compared with the White population) did not even exist at all until the 1985 Report of the Health and Human Services Secretary's Task Force on Black and Minority Health (also known as the Heckler Report). It was not until 2002 that the Institute of Medicine's report *Unequal Treatment* systematically delineated the body of evidence documenting disparities in the actual delivery of health care services (Nelson, 2003; Institute of Medicine (IOM), 2003). Among findings exposed by that report was that Blacks were less likely to have been given appropriate cardiac medications, to have undergone bypass surgery, or to have received kidney dialysis or transplants. A later review focused specifically on cardiac care concluded that Black adults were statistically less likely than White adults to undergo coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery in 21 of the 23 most rigorous studies that calculated odds ratios to compare CABG use (Mehta et al., 2016).

In 2021, the overwhelming majority of all physicians and healthcare providers remains White, and hence racial concordance between provider and patient is not always possible. Data indicate that in some circumstances, such non-concordance may in fact matter. A remarkable new set of analyses that focused on data from the state of Florida has provided evidence that when cared for by White doctors, Black newborns were nearly three times more likely to die than were White newborns, but that if the doctor of record was Black, the mortality rate for Black newborns (as compared with White newborns) was cut in half (Berg et al., 2010; Greenwood, et al., 2020; Picheta, 2020).

Clearly, the issues affecting health and healthcare are complex and varied, and major planning will be needed to dismantle structural racism still affecting the health care system in America. Diversity training and review of practices and policies for discrimination are certainly one important element (Yearby, 2018), and the COVID-19 crisis has led others to argue for

national commissions and large-scale reforms to protect Black and other underrepresented minority citizens "who at baseline do not have a safety net; they are the unprotected who are branded with an imposed status as the first to endure impact" (Laurencin & McClinton, 2020, p. 400). Such work is urgent and both smaller immediate, and larger-scale transformative, changes and reforms are called for.

Various Cities' Initiatives to Promote Racial Equity

As outlined above, the implications of structural racism and its effects on economic development, education, health, and interaction with the criminal-legal system are far-reaching. Because most majority culture individuals do not recognize the multitude of ways in which they unknowingly typecast, patronize, or exclude stigmatized minorities, training on bias is certainly one key element of reform. However, more broadly speaking, policies that explicitly combat discrimination and prejudice will need to be introduced and enforced to protect interests of racial and ethnic marginalized populations (Laurencin & McClinton, 2020; Yearby, 2018). Throughout the United States, communities and city governments have been responding, and a number have begun to systematically address racial marginalization.

One of the most coordinated efforts is the City Mayor's Society (Favro, 2021), which offers a website providing detailed information on the initiatives of cities partnering in this collaborative, along with progress made. Each city has designated an equity office within the governmental structure to evaluate, provide resources, and set up standards for their respective cities. The 32 cities within this collective providing national leadership in taking proactive responses include: Albuquerque NM, Asheville NC, Atlanta NC, Austin TX, Baltimore MD, Boston MA, Cambridge MA, Cedar Rapids IA, Champaign IL, Cleveland OH, Denver CO, Eugene OR, Evanston IL, Grand Rapids MI, Harrisburg PA, Iowa City IA, Long Beach CA,

Louisville KY, Madison WI, Minneapolis MN, New Orleans LA, New York City, NY Oakland CA, Philadelphia PA, Pittsburgh PA, Portland OR, Sacramento CA, San Antonio TX, Seattle WA, St Louis MA, Tacoma WA, and Tulsa OK. The cities' efforts have taken root in the areas of partnership engagement, educational increase, cultural awareness, advocacy, community accountability, resource distribution allocation, racial equity tools, and policy reorganization and development. The cities have also made statements addressing racial disparities and created offices focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Current Initiatives on Equity in St Petersburg, Florida

The City of St. Petersburg, Florida has itself taken significant steps to advance equitable opportunities for its residents. This History of Structural Racism in St Petersburg report was authorized by the Mayor and City Council. The City also commissioned and received a public contracting disparity study (Tampa Bay Times, September 25, 2021) which documents the City's utilization of available Minority and Woman-owned Business Enterprises (M/WBEs), and non-minority male owned businesses (non-M/WBEs) as prime contractors and subcontractors. Moreover, the decennial Charter Review Commission (City of St. Petersburg, 2021; Tampa Bay Times, October 6, 2021) completed its work in 2021 with four of seven proposed amendments explicitly advocating for increasing racial equity; in voting on the amendments in November 2021, between 40% and 45% of the electorate voted in favor of the four equity-related amendments. Finally, in August of 2021, the City Council passed a resolution declaring Racism as a Public Health Crisis (City of St. Petersburg Council Meeting, August 5, 2021). These initiatives collectively represent bold steps towards ameliorating the consequences of deeply rooted forms of structural racism. In addition to policy and organizational development, the City has undertaken a number of large-scale economic equity initiatives, including the Challenge Plan

of 1997 and the Midtown Strategic Planning Initiative of 2001-02. More recent advances include The 2020 Plan, a collective impact initiative supported by over 100 partners which is credited with measurably helping to reduce the African American poverty rate by 52%, from 2014 to 2019; the South St. Petersburg Community Redevelopment Area (CRA), established in 2015 as the first CRA in Pinellas County to be located within a low-income community; and the Deuces Rising and Sankofa on the Deuces initiative to heighten commercial density and access to business services for entrepreneurs of Color.

Section III. Methods

This report draws on reviews of existing published and public data and on new qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches to examine the historical and modern-day impact of structural racism on the lives of Black people in the city of St. Petersburg, Florida. Based on the pattern of findings, data reviewed are used as a basis for recommendations regarding actions that would help to dismantle racism and promote racial equity in St. Petersburg. A description of the data sources and analysis employed is below.

Data Sources

Data were garnered from publicly available sources, inclusive of the City of St Petersburg reports, peer-reviewed publications, articles in newspapers and journals, City Council Meeting Minutes, property records, community based organizational records, the U.S. Decennial Census, the American Community Survey, the National Association for Public Health Statistics and Information Systems, local data from the Clerk of the Courts, the Survey of Business Owners, and the Annual Survey of Entrepreneurship. Personal narratives from residents that documented their perspectives of the impact of structural racism within the community were also garnered via interviews and town hall conversations.

Data Analysis

Qualitative Data. The qualitative data were analyzed using a historical analysis of documents and thematic analysis of interviews and town hall discussions (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Gabbidon & Channeville, 2021; Joffe, 2012; Thies, 2002; Thomson, 2012). The historical analysis documented events that impacted the Black St. Petersburg community between 1868-2021. The historical context provides contextual insights relative to population growth, laws and policies, lynching, lack of Black representation in various leadership roles in St. Petersburg, economic opportunities and segregation, housing and road development, health care, education and policing that influenced norms pertaining to opportunities afforded to Blacks in St. Petersburg, Florida.

The personal narratives obtained from the interviews and town hall meetings were analyzed via a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012; Joffe, 2012). Interviews were conducted with residents of the City of St. Petersburg community via an online video conference platform (Zoom and Microsoft Teams). The participants were asked to provide a verbal informed consent before the interviews began. The interviews were audio recorded and video recorded (if possible). Field notes of the town hall conversations were taken. During the interviews, participants were asked to describe their experiences and observations of structural racism in the city of St. Petersburg and its implication on various facets of life. They were also asked to describe factors that contribute to structural racism, and possible strategies that can be used to address it within their community. The participants were also asked to provide demographics and relevant background information. The interviews and town hall conversations provided contemporary information as it relates to the occurrences in today's paradigm.

Pseudonyms were used to refer to the participants in the interviews and to the groups in the townhall to promote privacy and confidentiality. There were eight individuals that were interviewed virtually who represented various aspects of the community (such as civic organization, military, policing, and community residents concerned with property value and criminalization of the Black community). One resident (Resident 9) submitted responses to the interview question via email. Additionally, for the town hall meeting, 48 residents registered, and 32 attended the town hall meeting. Individuals who participated in the town hall were assigned to one of five breakout groups. Hence, to promote anonymity we refer to the groups as (Alpha, Beta, Gamma, Delta, Epsilon). We also collected narratives of residents that lived in the Gas Plant, who are identified in the document. Their narrative provides vivid description of their experiences of living in the Gas Plant.

Members of the research team reviewed the transcripts of the interviews and identified initial codes. The codes were subsequently grouped into themes such as policing, housing, business opportunities for Black people, health, and the quality of education. The research team summarized the findings and considered the extent to which the themes aligned with relevant literature. In large part, historical trends reviewed in this report aligned with themes in the narratives shared by current residents.

Quantitative Data. Whenever possible, frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendencies were used to analyze and summarize quantitative data and to compare potential differences between White and Black residents in St. Petersburg (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). In particular, the research team was able to obtain and analyze the frequency of various offenses, and the number of degrees attained at various levels and calculated percentages of Black defendants by offenses. The team also used data obtained from the Pinellas County

Property Appraiser on appraised values of and actual sales prices of properties by census tract. Finally, the team used data from the American Community Survey to compare median earned incomes of White and Black residents.

Limitations

This study was undertaken and completed during an intensive, time-compressed period in the summer and fall of 2021. Given the limited time allocated for the project, the scope of work was necessarily limited. For instance, extensive quantitative data analyses in the realms of health care and education are not included, although relevant historical documents and data are summarized. Parallel, ongoing efforts in St. Petersburg and Pinellas County in these two important areas regularly generate relevant data and should be considered in concert with findings from this study. Further, in continuing efforts, there remains a need to further examine relevant data that can get to the heart of particular questions and issues that can be directly addressed through new initiatives. Additional analyses can also help to build a grander understanding of the overlap and interplay among major structural indicators impacting quality of life through social determinants of health. With these caveats, the results detailed in this report are largely consistent with and reinforce findings from other completed and ongoing studies and initiatives underway in Pinellas County and the City of St. Petersburg.

Section IV. Results

Historical analysis completed for this study documented laws, policies, and practices throughout the past century that stifled opportunities for Black residents to obtain equitable economic advancement, education, and health care when compared to their White counterparts, and that collectively contributed negatively to creating the patterning of the social determinants of health that affect St. Petersburg's Black community. The various resources reviewed confirmed that lynching, activities of the Klu Klux Klan (KKK), and coordinated actions undertaken by other forms of White mobs were strategically used to terrorize the Black community and/or to restrict opportunities afforded to them. Qualitative data garnered via resident interviews echoed concerns that in South St. Petersburg, a variety of actions have adversely impacted Black residents. Beyond lack of economic opportunities, explicitly cited were the destructive impacts of developments such as Tropicana Field and Interstate 175 and 275 on available and affordable housing, and the need to transform policing.

Quantitative analyses documented additional evidence of modern-day inequity. New analyses revealed that in most instances (except for Reckless/Careless Driving and Motor Vehicle Noise), the percentage of Black defendants for various offenses exceeded the percentage of Blacks in St. Petersburg. Analyses also documented that more than half of all individuals arrested for resisting arrest with violence, improper pedestrian action, obstructing/resisting arrest without violence, and license not carried are Black.

Analyses of median income data revealed that non-Hispanic White median income was higher than that of non-Hispanic Black. This trend persisted by degree field, except for the median earned income for individuals with a degree in educational administration or teaching.

The data also revealed that in Black communities, home sale price is often lower than the assessed values.

In these and numerous other analyses, described in greater detail below, qualitative and quantitative data converged to suggest that Black residents of St. Petersburg do not have equitable opportunities within the criminal-legal, housing, and economic systems when compared to White residents.

To structure the reporting of results, a historical overview of events that impacted the Black community in St. Petersburg will first be provided. These accounts of historical trends will be augmented and punctuated by voices of current citizens who shared their own lived experiences and insights via interview. Subsequently, quantitative data and analyses speaking to modern day disparities and trends will be presented.

Historical Trends of Structural Racism within the City of St. Peterburg

An analysis of historical trends illustrates that as the population of the City of St. Petersburg began to grow, there was also an increase in discriminatory policies and practices that impacted the economic, health, and educational outcomes for Black residents. This section will describe the establishment and growth of the City of St. Petersburg; identify laws, policies, and practices that contributed to structural racism; discuss economic opportunities and segregation implications; provide insight into the development of Black housing communities and developments that negatively impacted the community; segregated education; the quality of health care that was accessed in Black communities; and notable protests, strikes, and other civil disturbances that advocated for equitable opportunities for Blacks.

The First People of African Descent on the Pinellas Peninsula

The first person of African descent known to set foot on soil that became the City of St. Petersburg was an enslaved Moroccan named Estavanico (also known as Esteban or Little Stephen) who was part of the Pánfilo de Narváez expedition that landed on the shores of North America in 1528, in St. Petersburg, on Boca Ciega Bay (the present-day Jungle Prada neighborhood). Though records are sparse, the next African descendants to arrive in the area may have been the Black enslaved persons who came to the peninsula with their owner, pioneer settler Dr. Odet Philippe. Records indicate, however, that John Donaldson, who arrived in 1868, was the first African American to permanently reside in St Petersburg.

The Growth of Black resident in the City of St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg was incorporated as a town of 300 people on February 29, 1892, and as a city in June 1903. In May 1911 a bill to create Pinellas County was passed in Florida's legislature and signed by the governor. The law was approved by referendum on November 14th, 1911 (Arsenault, 2017). However, Black people had lived in St. Petersburg decades before its incorporation, working as laborers and helping to build railways.

In 1868, John Donaldson (also referred to as “Old Black John” (St. Petersburg Times, June 29, 1901)), a formerly enslaved man, and Anna Germain, described as a mulatto housekeeper, arrived in St. Petersburg. Both were employees of Louis Bell, Jr., a White homesteader. Donaldson and Germain married and raised a family of eleven children. After a brief stint as Bell's employees, in 1871 they purchased 40 acres of land near Tangerine Avenue for a price of \$36 (equal to \$816.16 today (2021) (<https://www.in2013dollars.com/us/inflation/1860?amount=36>). Several historical documents note that Donaldson and his family were respected and integrated members of the local society.

He served as the postmaster for St. Petersburg for five years. Being the only Black family on the lower peninsula, there was little concern with caste and class; but as more African Americans moved to the area that begrudging acceptance would change (Arsenault, 2017). Over time the city implemented many Jim Crow laws that disenfranchised Black residents.

Figure 1

Photo of John Donaldson



Note. Image provided courtesy of the Pinellas County Historical Society and the African American Heritage Association of St. Petersburg, FL, Inc.

For nearly two-and-a-half-years (between January 1887 to Spring of 1889) there were calls for workers to assist in building the Orange Belt Railway. Different sources cite that more than a hundred African American laborers came to the area to complete the final stages of the Orange Belt Railway, and many remained and settled in an area east of what was then Ninth Street South between Third and Fourth Avenues, which became known as Pepper Town.

Between 1890-1900 African Americans began to form what would become the second Black neighborhood in the city. The area originally called Cooper's Quarters was also along Ninth Street (now MLK Street) south of First Avenue and was later known as the Gas Plant area

because of the twin gas tanks that dominated the landscape. While, in 1894, the Historical Bethel AME Church was founded and the third Black neighborhood, Methodist Town, began to form around the church and took its name from the church.

By 1907, St. Petersburg consisted of several distinct neighborhoods including Blacks. Each neighborhood operated under a strict social order. The world of work was dominated by men, Black and White, and Black women employed as domestic workers (Arsenault, 2017).

Between 1921-1926 Black workers were recruited from Georgia and Alabama to address the building boom of the time. The influx of workers tripled the Black population from 2,444 in 1920 to 7,416 in 1930 (which represented 18.35% of St. Petersburg's population). Between 1930-1940 there was a 60.4% increase in Black growth. Once again, this led to stricter and more formalized system of racial segregation (Arsenault, 2017).

Table 1 illustrates federal census data between 1910-2010. The data show that the population of African Americans grew from 1,098 in 1910 to 58,500 in 2010 (Table 1).

Table 1*Federal Census Data Between 1910–2010*

Year	Population in St. Petersburg, FL.	Number of African Americans in St. Petersburg, FL.	Percentage of St. Petersburg, FL population that were African Americans
1910	4,127	1,098	26.61%
1920	14,237	2,444	17.17%
1930	40,425	7,416	18.35%
1940	60,812	11,982	19.70%
1950	96,738	13,977	14.45%
1960	181,298	24,080	13.28%
1970	216,232	31,911	14.76%
1980	238,647	40,903	17.14%
1990	238,629	46,726	19.58%
2000	248,232	57,483	23.16%
2010	244,769	58,500	23.90%

Substantial Numbers of Pioneer Settlers were Pro-Slavery

A large percentage of the earliest settlers of the lower peninsula were “rabidly pro-Confederate” (Arsenault, 1988, p. 3) men who either fought to uphold slavery during the Civil War, or who sympathized and supported this cause. They included John Bethell, a Confederate soldier who served in Company K of the Seventh Florida Regiment from 1862 to 1865; Abel Miranda; and James Barnett, a Confederate veteran who settled on the future site of Gulfport, in 1868.

These pro-slavery adherents remained active on the civic and social landscape for decades more. They were on the winning side of a “little civil war” of 1911 when the United Confederate Veterans (and their supporters) almost caused a riot and forced the resignation of then School Superintendent W.R. Trowbridge for attempting to ban them from marching in the

annual Washington Birthday parade. The United Daughters of the Confederacy also operated in St. Petersburg before and after the turn of the 20th century.

The certitude that Blacks were inferior to Whites was widespread in local popular culture. One poignant illustration of the prevailing mindset was the sold-out local screening of the smash hit 1915 movie *Birth of a Nation* (Griffith, 1915), which historians credit for fueling a mass resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan and similar anti-Black groups across the United States. The St. Petersburg Board of Trade (later renamed the Chamber of Commerce) courted the film's producer for more than a year before finally orchestrating a local screening in March 1917. The event drew the modern-day equivalent of \$23,000 in advance ticket sales for the film's showing at the Plaza Theater in St. Petersburg. The craze led the Board of Trade to forecast that as many as 10,000 people would attend the 4-day run of the cinematic feat. If the estimate was even close, that equated to roughly 98% of St. Petersburg's White population at the time. In covering the 100th anniversary of the movie, NPR described *The Birth of a Nation* as "three hours of racist propaganda — starting with the Civil War and ending with the Ku Klux Klan riding in to save the South from Black rule during the Reconstruction era" (<https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/02/08/383279630/100-years-later-whats-the-legacy-of-birth-of-a-nation>). Dick Lehr, author of *The Birth of a Nation: How a Legendary Filmmaker and a Crusading Editor Reignited America's Civil War*, said of the film: "[It] portrayed the emancipated slaves as heathens, as unworthy of being free, as uncivilized, as primarily concerned with passing laws so they could marry White women and prey on them" (National Public Radio, 2015). This was indeed the way many local officials saw the city's Black residents. The belief would remain the dominant White majoritarian worldview for decades

more, and as can be seen from events below, would ensure that Black residents remained at the bottom of St. Petersburg's economic and social hierarchy.

Laws, Policies, and Practices That Contributed to Structural Racism

The growth and expansion of the Black community was negatively affected by the tightening of Jim Crow laws as the White community pushed outward from the downtown area. As a result, the Black community became even more overcrowded but with few paved roads and with limited access to city gas and water mains; many residents remained without basics such as electricity and running water (Arsenault, 2017).

The City of St. Petersburg implemented and enforced discriminatory laws that restricted social gatherings and interactions between Black and White in public places, voting rights were suppressed, and the Ku Klux Klan terrorized Black communities (Arsenault, 2017; Peck & Wilson, 2006).

Restriction to Social Gatherings and Interactions Between Black and White Residences

Black people in St. Petersburg, as throughout most of the country, lived in their own neighborhoods, attended their own churches and schools, swam at their own beaches, drank at their own bars, and were laid to rest in their own cemeteries (Arsenault, 2017). Police enforced policies that limited social interactions between White and Black residences of St. Petersburg, Florida. For example, in 1920 St. Petersburg police stated that they would arrest any White man found at night in Black areas of town, whatever their age or social standing (Arsenault, 2017). Similarly, in 1933, the City Council supported ordinances that banned Negroes from playing at White dances. On October 10, 1933, the St. Petersburg Times headlines read, "City Council divided over mixing races: Holds up ordinances banning negroes from playing at White dances" (p.3). The council was split four to three concerning an ordinance to prevent Negro orchestras

playing for dances attended by White people. The action came on the second reading of the proposed new ordinance brought before the council by Mayor R.G. Blanc “to cover difficulties that were reported to have arisen last year when prominent negro band leaders including Cab Calloway played here” (St. Petersburg Times, October 10, 1933, p.3). While in 1946, the City Council banned Blacks from downtown (then the center of commerce in St. Petersburg) except when working, by making it unlawful to sell to or serve people of Color in businesses maintained for Whites.

There were periods of time of strenuously enforced customs. Places were off limits to Blacks and the word “citizen” didn’t pertain. Although shopping was allowed in the best of stores on Central Avenue, clothes, hats, and shoes could not be tried on. Clothing sizes were guessed, and your foot was outlined on a piece of brown paper. Because of not being allowed to try on clothing or shoes and the policy that exchanges were not allowed, seamstresses, tailors and shoe repair shops abounded in the Black community. Thirst had to go unquenched unless there was a “Colored” water fountain, and a sit-down meal was out of the question. Alleys and bushes often served as restrooms. People could obtain food from vendors who sold hot dogs but had to eat as they continued along their way.

To avoid the humiliation and indignities brought on by these customs, Black people ate before leaving home, reminded children to make toilet stops, and drank little water to lessen the possibility of needing to use the facilities while downtown (Peck & Wilson, 2006), all reflective of how the city differentially fashioned everyday social determinants impacting Black residents’ health. One of this study’s Co-Investigators, Gwendolyn Reese, recalled shopping in a downtown toy and bicycle shop with her father and brother. Her father was buying a bicycle for his son, who made the unfortunate mistake of needing to go to the restroom. When her father

asked for his son to use the restroom, he was denied. She recalled her father becoming terribly angry, saying something to the clerk, and storming from the store -- with her brother crying because he thought he was not going to get his bicycle.

Such daily indignities were rampant. One notorious example was the city's famous green benches, symbolic of St. Petersburg but a reminder of the segregated norms that existed. In 1916, St. Petersburg became known as the city of green benches when Mayor Al Lang regulated the color and size of the benches along Central Avenue. From 1916 to the early 1960s green benches were a part of the city's image, appearing on postcards and brochures. It's been reported that at one time green benches in the downtown area numbered more than 3,000. The benches were seen as a symbol of hospitality and a place to socialize by White residents and visitors alike. However, for the city's Black residents, who were not allowed to sit on the benches, this everyday reminder was another indignity they had to endure. In the 1920s, Black men and women were not allowed to use the city parks or beaches or sit on the green benches. Most subdivisions excluded Black and Jewish people. Mordecai Walker reflected, "We had the green benches, of which I have one now. It was [for] White only. They removed the benches in 1969. They dumped them down by the end of the Pier and I got five of them".

Restrictions also applied to beaches that Black residents had access to. In 1949, the City Council unanimously approved a Negro bathing beach to be located at Maximo Point (St. Petersburg Times, June 17, 1949; June 20, 1949; June 21, 1949; June 22, 1949). The proposal was brought to council by City Manager Ross Windom and was initially supported by Councilman Excel Queen, chair of the City Council's Recreation Committee. He later claimed Windom had usurped the function of the committee. The committee chaired by Councilman Queen, had been "working on" the problem of where to locate a Negro beach for more than two

years without results. The proposal was shelved after petitions were circulated and protests filed by property owners in the Pinellas and Maximo Point sections on the south side. A main objection was that “Negroes using the beach would have to travel back and forth through some White areas” (St. Petersburg Times, June 20, 1949, p. 6).

In deliberations, Rev. W. A. Johnson, pastor of Mt. Carmel Baptist Church explained that members of his race were “law abiding citizens, willing to live together with all people” (St. Petersburg Times, June 22, 1949, Section 2, p.13). Yet even so one White resident, recalling an attempt eight years earlier to develop a beach for Blacks, declared: “We fought it then and we’ll fight it now” (St. Petersburg Times, June 21, 1949, Section 2, p. 15). Jack Puryear, Director of Recreation reportedly rose to his feet, during the fairly contentious meeting and amid violent objections by residents, declared, “Regardless of what we say or do, we must admit ...we have to have a Negro Beach. That is one thing we’ve got to have if we are to have progress in St. Petersburg” (St. Petersburg Times, June 21, 1949, Section 2, p. 15).

Puryear also pointed out that the City had been working for a Negro beach for years but had never been able to develop it because of the objections to every site that was mentioned. He appealed for “reason and sanity” (St. Petersburg Times, June 21, 1949, Section 2, p. 15) and to discard prejudice in any future discussions of the subject. The South Side Improvement Association submitted a letter requesting Council to consider developing the Negro beach on the mole adjacent to the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad pier (Dustin, 1949).

Documents indicate that during a five-hour session of City Council, a compromise was eventually reached on a location for a Negro beach. Unanimous agreement was reached to indeed locate the Negro bathing beach on the South Mole adjacent to the Atlantic Coast Line

Railroad pier. The compromise considered a temporary expediency prevailed until the desegregation of public places and spaces in St. Petersburg (Dustin, 1949).

In 1955, six African Americans sued to end segregation at the St. Petersburg downtown swimming pool (St. Petersburg Times, December 1, 1955). Although in 1957 the Supreme Court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs, in 1958 the city refused to desegregate the downtown pool and beach, choosing instead to close them. Thus, the city affirmed its commitment to segregated areas for individuals to swim.

Review of records also indicate that Black families at one time did live on Pass-a-Grille Beach. However, a Black man who owned two houses on Passe-a-Grille along with a rooming house was ultimately forced out by a 1920s boom which kickstarted the idea of the beach as a local paradise. Though for a spell he rented to Black workers from St. Petersburg who worked on the beach, owned a concession stand that sold refreshments, and rented swimsuits to Blacks who visited the beach on weekends, this came to an end. According to his son Julius Bradley:

We had to leave, all Indians and Blacks. It came down from city hall or somewhere. The mayor was named [J.J.] Duffy. We were the only ones left. What was happening was the city was expanding, and they were building on the bay side and the Gulf side, and the city was not going to sandwich in one Black family. (Peck & Wilson, 2006, p. 33).

As time passed, charters were put in place restricting residential locations for individuals based on their race. In 1931, St. Petersburg, at that time already one of the most segregated cities in the country, adopted a new city charter “to establish and set apart in said city separate residential limits or districts for White and negro residents.” (Arsenault, 2017, p. 265; General Powers, ff- St. Petersburg Times, February 14, 1931, Section 2, page 3). The enforcement of

these restrictions could not be left to restrictive covenants or racial customs (Arsenault, 2017).

The charter also included a clause banning White people from living or having a business in Black neighborhoods, while forbidding Black people from doing the same in White neighborhoods (Peck & Wilson, 2006). On May 1, 1936, the city ratified the area designated for African Americans to live (Arsenault, 2017; City Council Minutes, May 1, 1936). According to the City Council Minutes,

Commence at the intersection of 6th Ave. South and 17th St., follow 6th Ave. West to S.A.L. Railroad, follow right of way of railroad to 34th St. and South on 34th St. to 15th Avenue; East on 15th Avenue to 31st St., and on 31st St. N. to 12th Ave., East on 12th Ave. to 25th St. South on 25th St. to 13th Ave. S., E on 13th Ave to 22nd St. South on 22nd St. to 15th Ave. East on 15th Ave to 17th St., and North on 17th St. to intersection of 6th Ave., and 17th St. to place of beginning. (City Council Minutes, May 1, 1936, p. 175)

In the mid-1930s, the City Council formed the Inter-Racial Relations Committee with the purpose of improving race relations by reducing the interactions between Blacks and Whites in accordance with the segregationist provisions of the 1931 charter.

Thus, the City Council actively created policies that restricted social gathering and interactions between White and Black residents. The policies restricted where one could play music, sit, drink water, or eat food, swim, and live. These segregated policies had far-reaching impact on the overall income, employment, community support and advancement opportunities afforded to Black residents and defined Black-White differences in quality of life and the social determinants of health. Only after nearly three decades of implanting segregationist provisions in

its charter did the St. Petersburg City Council declare on July 11, 1963, that all city-owned facilities and city employment were open to all “regardless of race, color or creed”.

Law and Order: Racial Terror Lynching and the Presence of the Ku Klux Klan.

Racially biased police often worked together with the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). “The Stockade” located near the Gas Plant area and Third Avenue was where Black men were sent for the slightest offense. There were also wild car chases, brutal beatings, hangings, and other forms of terror witnessed by men, women, and children alike. Trauma touched everyone in the Black community in some way nearly every day (Peck & Wilson, 2006).

There were several documented lynchings in St. Petersburg. On December 25, 1905, John Thomas was lynched for the murder of James Mitchell, the city’s chief of police. Thomas was shot to death in his jail cell after which the doors were broken down allowing the mob to kick and mutilate his body (Arsenault, 2017). Similarly, on November 12, 1914, John Evans was lynched on the corner of Second Avenue and MLK Street South. He was suspected of killing Ed Sherman, a charge never proven owing to a lack of due process (Arsenault, 2017). In October 1915, Ebenezer Tobin, a suspected accomplice of John Evans, was put on trial for murder, convicted and executed. His execution represented Pinellas County’s first legal hanging. Neither Evans or Tobin received fair trials, and both professed their innocence until the end (Arsenault, 2017).

The KKK made their presence felt by intimidating Black residence by cross burning, marching, participating in public parades, and announcing their events publicly in the local newspaper (Peck & Wilson, 2006). They also publicly scheduled rallies (St. Petersburg Times, October 14, 1924; September 30, 1965; March 26, 1984; June 24, 1988). The Klan also made public announcements about the recruitment and initiation of new classes (St Petersburg Times,

February 6, 1925; November 4, 1953). Thus, the KKK made high-profile, deliberate efforts to ensure the Black community knew they were present and committed to advancing their White supremacy ideals.

Historical documents reviewed include letters that the KKK sent to individuals in leadership roles to influence the enacted policies and practices. For instance, in 1924, the KKK sent a letter to the sheriff and deputies of Pinellas County affirming that “it stands for the highest type of citizenship.” The letter went on to say,

Many of the nation’s leading men in private and official life, in Congress and elsewhere are Klansmen. Many of the best business and professional men of St. Petersburg are in our Klan and we are adding to the list. ...If you are not doing your full duty then you know it (and perhaps we know also). We are not criticizing you but writing to say that the eyes of the Klan are upon you, and upon the conditions existing in our community, calling for law enforcement, and we stand ready to help you in the discharge of your public duty in upholding the law and justice. ...This is an official communication, authorized in konklave assembled, by order of our Exalted Cyclops, and under the seal of the Klan. (St. Petersburg Times, June 22, 1924)

The letter was signed Knights of the Ku Klux Klan, Olustee Klan No. 20, St. Petersburg, FLA.

The same missive warned of their growing political strength, as demonstrated by the many city, county, and state officials who owed their victory or defeat to the KKK. Throughout the decade, the KKK chapter continued to flex its muscle in local political and civic circles.

KKK members did not just express their sentiments via written correspondence but did so in public marches. For instance, on July 20th, 1937, 200 members of the KKK marched with torches in St. Petersburg in response to Black participation in a civil service referendum, which

triggered a storm of White protest. The KKK march was meant to warn Whites from “meddling with the Negro vote” (St. Petersburg Times, July 20, 1937, p.3) and warn Blacks to stay away from the polls. “Our organization is for Americanism” (St. Petersburg Times, July 20, 1937, p.2) one Klan leader said, “and using the negro vote for personal gain has no part in our conception of Americanism.” (St. Petersburg Times, July 20, 1937, p.2). Expressing its defiance to Klan threats, the Black community had a high voter turn-out, though their votes fell on the losing side of the referendum. Subsequently, a new City Manager replaced the allegedly Black-friendly Police Chief with E. D. “Doc” Vaughn, whom one local historian described as

A militant White supremacist whose uncompromisingly harsh attitude toward the Black community was a throwback to an earlier, more brutal era, Chief Vaughn was a folksy, self-styled “Florida Cracker” who sometimes seemed out of place in a genteel resort city. He nonetheless received strong support from racial conservatives, both inside and outside of city hall. (Arsenault, 2017, p. 305).

Under Vaughn’s leadership, the police department’s activities in the Black community reportedly became increasingly brutal. For instance, on October 16, 1937, a shootout between police and a young Black laborer, J. C. “Honeybaby” Moses, left two police dead. Although Moses was later shot to death by police, a vengeance-seeking White mob threatened to turn the affair into a full-scale riot. Chief Vaughn sated the mob by putting Moses’ body on public display.

In addition to periodic “vagrancy sweeps” and “crackdowns” in Black neighborhoods, events during Vaughn’s reign included: the 1938 Police officers assault of Noah Griffin (NAACP President and principal of Gibbs High School) during a picnic of Black teachers at a location off limits to Blacks; the creation of a system of Black convict labor leasing that

exacerbated the already common practice of criminalizing Black men for offenses such as being unemployed; intensified police brutality as the documented killing of a Black male suspect in August 1942, and the savage beating of a Black female prisoner in October 1944 (Arsenault, 2017). In November 1942, city officials issued a “Work or Jail” edict that initiated periodic police raids on Black bars and pool halls to root out “loafers” and “idlers” (St. Petersburg Times, November 24, 1942) The edict empowered the police to act as labor agents for the city and other local employers short of labor. In 1945, Vaughn was formally reprimanded for the death of the female prisoner from City Manager Carleton Sharpe who ultimately fired him (Arsenault, 2017). Such documentation of police brutality, and of policing used to exploit Black men for labor (detailed below), further traumatized St. Petersburg’s Black community.

Discrimination was also documented within the city’s police force. In 1965, a group of 12 Black St. Peterburg police officers memorialized as “The Courageous 12” (Officers Leon Jackson, Adam Baker, Freddie Crawford, Raymond DeLoach, Charles Holland, Robert Keys, Primus Killen, James King, Johnnie B. Lewis, Horace Nero, Jerry Styles, and Nathaniel Wooten), risked their livelihoods by filing a discrimination lawsuit in order to have the full rights and authorities of their White counterparts on the police force. Though the lawsuit was initially dismissed in federal court on April 1, 1966, by Judge Joseph Lieb, through the support of the NAACP, an appeal was won in the U.S. Court of Appeals on August 1, 1968. The following year, Officer Leon Jackson became the first Black officer assigned to work in a predominantly White neighborhood (City of St. Petersburg Police Department, 2020, <https://police.stpete.org/courageous12/index.html>). This case served as a national catalyst for minorities to be given promotional opportunities in law enforcement.

Vagrancy Laws and Other Racial Sentencing Disparities Fueled a City-Run Convict Labor Program

St. Petersburg was one of many cities that used police power to control and devalue Black labor and identities. Various policies enshrined in Florida's Black Codes were often vigorously applied here as well (Richardson, 1969). For instance, a city-run convict labor program was fueled by vagrancy laws and a sweeping system of criminal sentencing disparities. This led not just to the arrest and conviction, but the forced labor of thousands of Blacks from St. Petersburg. Targeted individuals were subsequently assigned to put in work on public and private sector labor gangs. From roughly 1877 to 1919, the state-run convict work program leased the labor of roughly 14,000 prisoners "to the highest bidder" through a "sprawling network of privately-owned labor camps" where prisoners worked in phosphate mines, turpentine farms and sugar cane plantations (Donegan, 2019).

Over a 30-year period (1910-1940), the racially charged actions of City of St. Petersburg officials robbed Black families of hundreds of millions of dollars in labor that went instead into prisoner work programs (an estimate based upon samplings of sentencing reports for Black versus White convict sentences). Indeed, arrests by St. Petersburg police (and Pinellas County deputies) functionally served as a central intake point channeling Black laborers, once they were convicted, into city, county and-privately-run state prison farms and, later, state road construction projects done by "chain gangs."

Vagrancy Laws to Feed City-Funded Projects. Precedents for these racist actions can be found in documents dating as far back as 1901, when city officials used the local vagrancy law to institutionalize a system of substantially Black prison labor. Such practices yielded a major source of workers for city-funded construction projects including the downtown seawalls. One of

the earliest ordinances passed by the newly formed St. Petersburg town council, in May 1892, was a law punishing “vagrants, rogues, idle and dissolute persons.” (Pinellas, 1945). Little is known about the ordinance’s application during the city’s foundational years, but by 1912, City officials had used the law to institutionalize a system of substantially-Black convict labor that supplied workers to public works projects.

Evidence suggests that putting inmates to work on City projects was the norm in 19th century St. Petersburg, as it was for municipalities across the nation. A 1901 media report shows the practice already being applied in St. Petersburg, in the case of two Black men:

Mayor Harrson transacted a little magisterial business during the week. One August Bowl, colored...was offered his choice between \$5 or 5 days on the street-work. Another gentleman of color, one Jes. Carroll of Tarpon Springs, got mixed up with Night Officer Anderson, and he too got \$5 – the coon, not Anderson. (St. Petersburg Times, July 13 1901, p. 5)

Similarly, an editorial in 1911 told of the popularity of the “Swat the Vagrant” slogan and calls for rigid enforcement of the vagrancy laws:

There is strong demand for a rigid enforcement of the vagrancy laws, and “Swat the Vagrant” has become as popular a slogan as “Swat the Fly” was a few weeks ago. While the suggestion along this line is particularly pertinent as concerns the negro idler, there is equal reason for positive and concerted action against the large contingent of White grafters, pan-handlers, and dead-beats which overrun this state particularly during the winter months. (St. Petersburg Times, November 7, 1911, p. 8)

By the 1910s, vagrancy law was being applied for commercial purposes by St. Petersburg city officials, to meet the labor needs of both city government and private construction contractors.

That year, the St. Petersburg City Council passed a vagrancy ordinance allowing for up to \$50 fine and/or 60 days jail time. The vague wording of state and local vagrancy laws made it possible for St. Petersburg police to arrest Blacks (to whom the law was nearly exclusively applied) for infractions as minor as standing on a street corner, having a beer in a local pool room, or even just sitting on one's porch during traditional employment hours.

Among the most notorious historical figures was Mayor A. T. Blocker, empowered to serve as judge for at least some categories of arrest. Reports indicate that Blocker used his discretion to differentially channel Black laborers into work programs. For instance, the *St. Petersburg Times* news report on November 28, 1911, notes that "Mayor Blocker had four negroes before him last Friday morning who had been picked up by the police for loitering and refusing work when offered, and promptly put them to work for the city" (St. Petersburg Times, November 28, 1911, p. 1). The article also noted that "This method should prove very effective in curing some of these loafing darkies of this habit." (St. Petersburg Times, November 28, 1911, p. 1).

A City Council discussion the following week described the practical underpinnings of the Black prison-labor pipeline, and the rationale that was used to justify it. Key elements of the argument were that negro men were lazy and preferred to live-off their women. In addition, they were being paid too much in daily wages, which caused them to work fewer days, thus exacerbating the labor shortage:

The vagrancy discussion was opened by Frank J. Stamm of Houser & Stamm, contractors on the seawall,...stated that he wished some further action taken on the matter of having idle negroes put to work as it was difficult to complete his contract job on account of the impossibility of obtaining laborers...At first Mr.

Stamm stated they had paid \$1.75 but had later increased the pay to \$2 per day, but that conditions had become worse, as the negroes at that rate did not have to work so many days to get enough money on which to live...

Mayor Phiel as well as Chief of Police Easters stated that they did not believe the city could legally make the negroes work as long as they had any means of support, whether this means was their wives or some other dependent...

Pres. Sullivan stated that, as justice of the peace, he would have the jail filled within a few hours if he had an officer to help him...

Chief Easters stated that the reason so many idle negroes were on the streets now was that they would not work during the Christmas holidays, and he expected to see that the negroes went to work next week. He further stated that since the agitation came up at the last meeting of the council that there had been a decrease in idle negroes in all sections of the city and that he would see to it that they worked hereafter.

It seemed to be the opinion of the council and others present at the meeting that the negroes were too well paid and that they obtained money enough to satisfy their needs by working less time than formerly. The fact that negro women are doing much work during the tourist season was cited as one reason for there being more negro men idle, as they were living on what the women made.

(*St. Petersburg Daily Times*, December 27, 1912, p.1).

The *St. Petersburg Times* editorial board took a less militant stance, but nevertheless supported City Council strategy to meet the Black labor shortage:

The negro 'vagrancy' question is one perhaps not easily settled under the rules of nicest ethics; but when a city is growing and its people are pushing all kinds of private and public improvements, to have to see their plans come to a standstill because labor cannot be secured even at big wages, and at the same time see crowds of robust negroes loafing about, doing nothing, Is pretty trying, isn't it?
(St Petersburg Daily Times, December 28, 1912, p. 4)

In 1914, the city undertook a crackdown on Black vagrants and made no bones about their intent to channel their labor into work programs. "Police are going after dark skinned vagrants; Vagrants of ebony hue will have a chance to harden muscles on city streets," was the headline of a frontpage article in the *St. Petersburg Daily Times* on February 17, 1914. The report noted,

These idle negroes," stated Chief of Police Easters, "loaf around the city, hang out at the negro resorts and generally prey on other negroes. These men I have just arrested are nothing more than common vagrants and they will likely get sentences in police court to make them realize just what hard work is.

There are a lot of negroes who each Saturday night rake in all or the greater part of the earnings of hard-working negroes. Many of them are fed by women who work for White people and others spend their time "skinning" or gambling in other ways. We mean to break up these gangs of worthless, "no-count" negroes and our campaign has already started.

(St. Petersburg Daily Times, February 17, 1914, p. 1)

One of the most glaring vagrancy sentences was in 1917, in the case of Claude Townsend, a 15-year-old Black boy "who was causing the officers much trouble by throwing rocks at everybody

he met.” Townsend pleaded guilty. “Justice Carter gave young Townsend a present of six months at hard labor in an effort to make a man of him.” (St Petersburg Times, April 19, 1917)

The next palpable wave of Black arrests (judging by an uptick in media reports) came during the mid-1920s, and – like the vagrancy wave of the early 1910s, this fresh wave appeared to correlate with acute labor shortages during a real estate development boom in St. Petersburg. Black muscle was critically needed on construction sites, and police raids and vagrancy arrests helped fill a portion of the gap. In May 1924 the St. Petersburg Police Chief of Detectives John Trotter issued a “work or leave” ultimatum for Black men:

Chief Trotter has issued a warning to all negroes loafing on the streets that they either go to work or leave the city. “We are going to arrest every negro found loafing on the streets out of work. There is plenty of work here for those willing to earn their living and if they don’t choose to work voluntarily – the city needs men to sweep the streets.” (St. Petersburg Times, May 10, 1924, p. 2)

Days later, a news article announced the arrest of 15 Black men on charges of loafing. Chief Trotter reiterated his warning “If a negro can’t find work, let him come to the police station and we will find something for him. In the meantime, every negro who cannot show that he is usefully employed will be brought to jail” (St. Petersburg Times, May 13, 1924). The police made good on the threats. News reports show a surge in arrests for vagrancy, loafing, and disorderly conduct (i.e., charges that depended almost entirely on police officers’ personal interpretation). Large arrest hauls were not uncommon, such as the round-up of 12 Blacks arrested on charges of loafing in September 1924 (St. Petersburg Times, September 19, 1924) and the arrest of 25 negroes following “a disturbance in the negro quarters” (St. Petersburg Times, July 1, 1924, Section 2, p 11) in July of that year. More common though was the arrests

of one or two vagrants or loafers at a time, which sometimes involved the instantaneous conversion of charges to vagrancy when evidence could not be roused to make more serious charges stick (St Petersburg Times, July 29, 1921).

Local law enforcement also pioneered new policies to uphold the racial balance of power, ensuring that Blacks remained the overwhelming majority of laborers put behind bars. For Blacks, charges were invented, or the charging process was skipped altogether. Robert Gordon (a Black man) was the first person in St. Petersburg to be arrested on the charge of Night Prowling when “Gordon was found late Thursday night, far from his home and was unable to explain to officers his errand. He is the only person arrested so far on this charge and police were unable to connect him with any of the recent robberies” (St. Petersburg Times, June 15, 1924). By contrast, local police, judges, and justices often extended every courtesy to Whites, readily transforming the law to their benefit. For instance, in 1912, the City Council adopted a new ordinance, increasing the maximum speed for cars in the city limits to 15 miles an hour instead of 10. A report on the matter notes: “This was the direct outcome of some trouble on the part of a City Councilman in keeping his car within the limit of speed and his consequent arrest for speeding” (St. Petersburg Daily Times, August 23, 1912, p.1). Another poignant example occurred in 1924. According to the St. Petersburg Times report,

Judge E. H. Dunn invented a new sentence in municipal court Saturday morning for Everett Reshard [a White man], found guilty of a charge of driving an automobile while under the influence of intoxicating liquor, when he sentenced him to 60 days at hard labor with the stipulation that he was to enter city employ as an electrician, receiving regular pay, all of which is to be turned over to the man’s family. The court told Reshard that he would be given a jail sentence had it

not been for his large family which it was necessary for him to support. (St. Petersburg Times, 1924, p. 8)

Meanwhile the push to incarcerate Blacks continued unabated. A June 16, 1925, edition of the *St. Petersburg Times* announces the start of a new campaign by city officials “to clean out negro town” (St. Petersburg Times, June 16, 1925, p. 12) with arrest raids. The same article touted the arrest of three Black men and noted that more arrests were to come.

The City Weed Gang and Work Crews. On the eve of the Great Depression, local media reports began to cite the existence of a city weed gang, also known as a “labor gang”. This referred to city jail inmates being sent to work on city projects that ranged from landscaping work, street cleaning, sanitation and unloading lumber, to construction and other labor needed for public works and city-funded projects. City work crews had long been staffed by jail inmates, but the appearance of the term “city weed gang” and descriptions of it (appearing in the media from 1928 to 1946) helped aid in better quantifying the number of people jailed and assigned to hard labor by the City of St. Petersburg. The precise size of city weed gang was reported to have been in the hundreds. “The city weed gang composed of unemployed persons given work by the city is fed at the stockade and sometimes more than 200 eat there at a time.” (St. Petersburg Times, Feb 21, 1933, p.2). “Approximately 350 men were having lunch at the stockade during a visit by the city manager in April 1933” (St. Petersburg Times, April 28, 1933).

Vagrancy and loafing arrests became a steady pipeline of menial labor to the city weed gang and other departments and projects of the City of St. Petersburg. The *St. Petersburg Times* on July 16, 1929 noted that 13 of the 15 arrestees were each sentenced to 10 days labor on the city weed gang; the other two proved that they had visible means of support and were freed. The

article indicated, “The negroes will be put to work cutting weeds and assisting the sanitary department in mosquito control work” (St. Petersburg Times, July 16, 1929, p.3).

City Council Effort to Create a Prison Farm. As a solution to overcrowding in the city jail, the City of St. Petersburg attempted to build a prison farm in the early 1930s and allocated up to \$5,000 to purchase land and build the facility. The proposal was introduced by Councilman Glenn Miller (a one-time president of St. Petersburg’s KKK chapter) to replicate the success of places such as the State of Texas, which in 1928, operated 12 state prison farms where nearly 100 percent of the workers on them were Black (Delaney et al., 2021).

There is every indication that the practice continued in St. Petersburg for at least two decades more. In 1942 the city police department, with the support of City Council and under the leadership of openly racist Police Chief Doc Vaughn - resuscitated the Black convict labor leasing practice, reportedly to address labor shortages during the war years. In November of that year, city officials issued a “work or jail” edict that stepped-up police raids on Black bars and pool halls to root out “loafers” and “idlers.” The edict empowered the police to act as labor agents for the city and other local employers short of labor.

The Impact of the Prison Labor Pipeline

Urban Market Analytics used media reports to analyze local court appearances and adjudications of arrestees over a period of 30 years, from 1910 to 1940. The analysis found racial disparities in arrests, convictions and sentencing that caused the loss of an estimated \$330 million in wages for Black convicts and their families.

Black arrestees were four times more likely than whites to have their labor diverted to the prison system, rather than being available to provide for their families. Though African Americans were only an average 18% of St. Petersburg’s population during the period, Blacks

were 76% of persons sentenced to time behind bars, and 82% of those convicted to hard labor.

The extreme overrepresentation of Blacks stemmed from disparate treatment at every stage of justice system involvement. Certain offenses led to labor convictions nearly exclusively for Blacks. For example, African Americans accounted for 92% of persons sentenced to time behind bars for the crimes of vagrancy and loafing.

War Posture Against African Americans

Contributing to the hugely disproportionate rate of arrests of Blacks was local law enforcement's adoption of a war posture to battle back against the perceived laziness and crime-prone attitudes of Blacks. While conceding hard working negroes that are a good sort, city officials became proactive in driving out and controlling the negroes perceived to be of a bad sort. From 1903 to 1946, the City launched at least 20 raid campaigns, specifically targeting African Americans, for diverse infractions such as a "war against negro speeders" in July 1924. Police enacted an anti-vagrancy campaign in "negro town" in June 1925. A Christmas Day article in 1921 reported "a half dozen raids" by police who searched "500 negroes" for firearms. Though whites were sometimes caught in the drag nets, it was clear – from the words of City officials and the headlines chosen by local media – that Blacks were the target of the arrest raids.

Politics and Public Office

At the turn of the 20th century White leaders blatantly asserted white supremacy in public policy making. As the city's Black population grew by leaps and bounds during the 1910s and 1920s, Blacks across Florida were registering to vote in small but growing numbers.

This shift presented a concerning challenge to the vice grip control that White residents had over the levers of local government. In response, policies were put in place to restrict the voting rights of Blacks in St. Petersburg. As time passed, the representation of Blacks in the City

Council, the judiciary, and the School Board remained scarce right up until the time of the civil rights era. This lack of representation and restriction of Blacks rights to vote limited Black residents' ability to generate policies that could disrupt discriminatory practices.

Privileging Voting Rights for White residents. In St. Petersburg, primaries and charters were historically restricted to Whites only. For instance, in 1913, a “Whites-only” primary in a city election was conducted by the Democratic Party (Peck & Wilson 2008). Arsenault (2017) noted in *St. Petersburg and the Florida Dream*:

At the time, approximately five hundred local Blacks were registered to vote, and a number of White politicians were openly courting the Black vote. This alarmed James G. Bradshaw, the front- running candidate for commissioner of public affairs, who declared that he "wanted to go into public office as the choice of the White voters of the city and would rather not have the office than to rely on the negroes to win." This new policy was wholeheartedly endorsed by Lew B. Brown, the editor of the St Petersburg Independent, who insisted that the White primary was necessary "in order to maintain control of city affairs in the hands of the White people." With Brown's help, Bradshaw got his wish, inaugurating a new era in local politics. Even though an actual "White primary" was not tried again until 1921 and many Blacks continued to vote in general elections, widespread intimidation gradually reduced Black participation and influence in local Democratic politics—the only politics that mattered in early twentieth-century St. Petersburg.

(Arsenault, 2017, p 128.)

Thus, Florida lawmakers mandated “Whites only” primary elections to neuter Black political influence. St. Petersburg carried out its White primary with gusto.

A December 1921 St. Petersburg Times editorial made the case that the very future of St. Petersburg was at stake, if voters sided with then Mayor Noel Mitchell, who'd allowed the Black "lower elements" to "usurp the Central Avenue benches" and mingle freely with White people everywhere, "without respect for the... established customers" (St. Petersburg Times, December 20, 1921, p. 4). The segregationists won that election. Their preferred candidate, Frank Puliver, beat Mitchell, and quickly restored strict boundaries for Black life and commerce in St. Petersburg. A photo of the St. Petersburg Times December 4, 1921, front page, which illustrated a copy of the ballot for a "White Primary election" is depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2

St. Petersburg Times, December 4, 1921: Front Page Illustrating White Primary Election Ballot

The 1931 charter attempted to reinforce the institution. It included a provision for continuing White primary election (Peck & Wilson, 2008). Considering policies were in place to restrict voting rights of Blacks, it remained difficult for Black voices to be heard in political decision making.

Not all local Whites aligned with White supremacists. Many were seen as moderates on issues of race, but nevertheless exhibited rank paternalism toward the African American community – a posture rooted in a shared belief in Black inferiority. One of the earlier manifestations of this patronizing and paternalistic attitude can be seen in a news report from 1913. In detailing results of a meeting between Black advocates and the local school board to discuss disparities in facilities and the need for better teachers, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported: “The board will attempt to follow closely the desires of the negroes as far as practical and for their best interests” (St. Petersburg Times, June 14, 1913, p.6).

The Ku Klux Klan Among City Leaders

The city’s White elite reinforced their political dominance in the 1920s and 1930s in part under the auspices of the St. Petersburg Ku Klux Klan (KKK) Klavern, known as the Olustee No. 20 chapter. For instance, a June 8, 1924, article in the St. Petersburg Times reports one local judge’s commitment to consider policies being advocated for by the KKK. The KKK leaders were rarely named in the local press, but from what little we know, KKK’s officers of the era included Glenn Miller, President of the local KKK chapter, who appears to be the same man who was a member of the Chamber of Commerce Board of Governors, and a one-time City Councilmember who in 1932 proposed the creation of a prison farm as a work outlet for city prisoners. The KKK’s secretary L.W. Dow was owner of the Commodore Hotel on Central Ave and chief patriarch of the Odd Fellows’ Encampment No. 10.

The Rise of “Segregationists” in Local Politics

The KKK routinely held 100-plus person gatherings, hosted citywide entertainment events including a circus (St. Petersburg Times, November 12, 1925) and staged mass cross-burning ceremonies in the mid-1920s. Yet the KKK never succeeded in galvanizing the mass

armies of civic leaders and everyday citizens they sought to defend the borders of segregation from the 1930s onward.

Though it continued to operate actively in St. Petersburg in the 1950s and 1960s, the KKK had already begun to lose its elite ranks by the 1930s and 1940s. During that period, business and civic leaders were flocking instead to groups such as the Protective League, formed in 1935 following the City Council's decision to abandon a federally funded housing development plan at Campbell Park (St. Petersburg Times, October 19, 1935). The local White Citizens Council was one of hundreds of such councils that sprang up across the south, to defend segregation (St. Petersburg Times, April 19, 1956). In particular, the White Citizens Council objected to the integrationist tide unleashed by the U.S. Supreme Court's 1954 decision in *Brown v the Board of Education of Topeka*. This new breed of segregationist organizations shunned the violence associated with overtly White supremacist groups such as the KKK. Instead, they used economic, biblical, and sexual rationales for resisting integration, including a fear of the "mongrelization" of the White race. The anti- miscegenation argument was summed up in a statement by William H. Boggess, Vice President of the local Citizens Council:

I do not hate Negroes. I have many fine Negro friends. Contrary to the impressions created by the statement in The Times about the preachers – I don't have it in for preachers either. I'm studying nights to be one myself. I only want to preserve those God-given distinctions for the children of both races. A mongrelized America in my opinion would be the greatest of tragedies. (St. Petersburg Times, October 15, 1955, p. 29).

The Rev. Dr. C. Lewis Fowler was a passionate local advocate championing a religious case for segregation. He was quoted by the St. Petersburg Times on October 14, 1955 as having

said, “There is not a Negro hater in the room...segregation is not discrimination of the races but the fundamental law of the Almighty” (p.21). Quoting a separate speech, a month prior, a St. Petersburg Times article had captured more of Fowler’s philosophy:

Fowler charged that the Negro integration issue “is the one supreme problem that faces us today” and darkly warned of forces seeking to destroy the Anglo-Saxon race... He also leaned heavily on race themes, stating the “race to which we belong shall determine the destiny of all mankind.”..... Dr. Fowler compared octaroons to mules, said “we’re the best friends the colored people have” and warned “mongrelizing” will gain them nothing.” (St. Petersburg Times, September 22, 1955, p. 25).

Fowler was president of Citizens Council of Florida, a rival group to the larger and longer-lived Citizens Council, Inc. He was also president of the Kingdom Bible Seminary and Pastor of the paradoxically named Church for All Peoples. The seminary trained hundreds of clergy during its existence. Partly because of their generally kinder, gentler messaging, segregationist groups were even more widely supported by St. Petersburg’s White citizenry than overtly White supremacist groups had been.

The Protective League, later renamed the St. Petersburg Taxpayers Protective League to reinforce its economic rationale. Protecting property values from the ravages of integration was a driving creed of this and a dozen other like-minded groups who staged major rallies protesting racial integration in St. Petersburg.

Over two dozen protests, rallies, and petition drives staged by pro- supremacy and later pro-segregation forces took place in St. Petersburg during the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. Virtually all succeeded in their aim to halt or limit the physical encroachment of Black people into Whites

only territory. The end result was the perpetuation of separate and unequal access to opportunity for St. Petersburg's Black citizens. In the mid-1950s, the local White Citizens Council obtained 12,000 signatures to its petition drive to halt the integration of public schools.

Supremacists and Segregationists in City Hall

From the city's birth through the 1960s, White supremacist and segregationist groups openly operated in tandem with local officials, and often supplied their ranks as well. In St. Petersburg, the history of city officials is replete with elected mayors and councilmembers, and high-ranking appointed officials who spoke openly about their intent to uphold economic and residential segregation, even when it called for them to circumvent or disobey the law. During the first half of the 20th century, the practice was blatant. On several occasions, City Councilmen publicly vowed to find ways to get around federal laws that had begun to pierce the sanctity of segregation. Such incidents involved City Council's participation in limiting contracts to Black-owned businesses (in the 1920s).

Later, there was reliance on "indirect segregation" policies after a formal segregation plan for the city was deemed unconstitutional (St. Petersburg, October 20, 1937). There were also City Council's decision to relinquish management of the Pasadena Golf Course in order to avoid racially integrating its membership (St. Petersburg Times, June 3, 1954).

City officials routinely lent support to organizations tasked with safeguarding the racial order. White supremacists marched annually in the City-sponsored Festival of States parade in the 1920s. During the 1940s and 1950s, The Protective League often held its membership meetings at City Hall, while officials at every level of government openly spoke their allegiance to the segregationist cause. City and county officials read White citizens protests and petitions into the public record while failing to give light, or stage to Black entreaties.

St. Petersburg City officials who unashamedly practiced in supremacist and segregationist vein included Mayor A.T. Blocker and Council President Sullivan, who led the quasi- formalization of the city-operated convict labor program. Mayor C.M. Blanc committed his support for the city’s Whites only primary election system in an editorial in 1921 (St. Petersburg Times – November 30, 1921, p.5). Millege Wever spearheaded the creation of a new segregation plan in 1936 and helped orchestrate the demise of a 1935 housing plan at Campbell Park; and Samuel Johnson, a Councilman and six-year Mayor who acknowledged efforts to prevent African Americans from buying and building homes in White areas of the city.

It is important to note that many segregationists were considered political moderates at the time. They ostensibly favored separate and equal facilities, or at least the appearance of equality, as a specific means of staving off integration. Former State Representative Donald McLaren was cut from this cloth. In speaking at a White Citizens Council meeting in 1955, McLaren said that the “sure way” to stop desegregation in Pinellas County was to give “the Negro equal opportunities and that means a colored junior college” (St. Petersburg Times, October 7, 1955, p.21). He also took the opportunity to publicly attack the NAACP for being controlled by “ulterior motives certainly far flung from these American shores” (St. Petersburg Times, October 7, 1955, p.21).

Limited Black Representation in the City Council, in the Judiciary and on the School Board

Almost a century after the first African American arrived in the area later chartered as St. Petersburg, the city’s White power brokers exerted unmitigated influence over public policy decisions and the allocation of today’s equivalent of hundreds of millions of dollars in public investments for development that benefitted White people exclusively, or nearly so. It was nearly 100 years after John Donaldson’s arrival in St. Petersburg before C. Bette Wimbush became the first African American elected to the St. Petersburg City Council (indeed, to any public office in

Pinellas County), in 1969. Meanwhile, the strategies deployed by White influencers morphed over time in response to periodic gains in Black political power and population growth, as well as to the gradually expanding body of federal policies that – by and by – outlawed the most blatant forms of discrimination. In every era of strategy, White business and civic leaders fought back against Black progress through the blunt but effective instrument of local governmental policies.

Prior to the civil rights era, Blacks did not serve in leadership roles of the City Council, the judiciary or on the School Board in St. Petersburg. Even though a Black individual may run for a position, their electoral bid might not have been successful. For instance, in 1963 Isaiah W. Williams was defeated in a bid to win a seat on the council representing District 5. He lost by a vote of 14,379 to 21,668, to Mrs. Daisy Edwards, who served two terms on the council previously (St. Petersburg Times, March 20, 1963). As indicated earlier, the lack of representation had implications on what initiatives were ultimately supported and policies that were implemented. Therefore, it became custom in the community to celebrate the few Blacks who were elected or appointed in leadership roles in the City Council.

After C. Bette Wimbish became the first Black person to be elected to the St. Petersburg City Council in 1969, David Welch became the second African American Council member in 1981. They were both strong advocates for increasing opportunities for Blacks. In 1997, Frank Peterman, Jr. was also elected to St. Petersburg City Council, and currently at the time of this report (in 2021) two Black women serve as council members, Deborah Figgs-Sanders, and Lisa Wheeler-Bowman.

There were also Black citizens who served as deputy mayor of the City. In 1997, Goliath Davis was named by Mayor David Fischer as the first Black police chief. He was subsequently

named Deputy Mayor for Midtown by Mayor Rick Baker in 2001. On November 14, 2013, Kanika Tomalin was named by Mayor-elect Rick Kriseman as his deputy mayor. She was the first Black woman to hold this position, and the first Black deputy mayor with a citywide purview.

At the county level, in 2000, Ken Welch became the first Black from St. Petersburg elected to the Pinellas County Commission, for which he served five terms. Nevertheless, the first Black elected to the county commission was Calvin D. Harris of Clearwater in 1998.

For the judiciary, James B. Sanderlin became Pinellas County's first Black judge in 1972, and in 1976 he was subsequently elected and became the first Black Circuit Court judge. Decades later, in 2010, Patrice W. Moore was elected to serve as Circuit Court judge for the Sixth Judicial Circuit. She was the first Black female to serve in this position.

As a local leader, James B. Sanderlin skillfully used the law to facilitate the desegregation of schools in Tampa Bay and to fight for better working conditions for sanitation workers (Goodden, 1995). After graduating from Boston University Law School in 1958, he passed the Florida Bar in 1963, and began to get involved in the local civil rights movement. Sanderlin wanted to address segregated schools in Pinellas County even though many individuals opposed the idea and he received threats on his life. Nevertheless, Sanderlin persevered and desegregated not only the Pinellas County Schools, but Hillsborough and Sarasota counties as well. Sanderlin also represented over 200 city sanitation workers who were on strike for better working conditions. The city fired the workers, but Sanderlin got 86 of the 211 workers jobs back, as well as improving their working conditions (NNB Black History Project, 2016).

Remarkably, Blacks were never elected to the school board prior to the turn of the twenty-first century. Even though, Rev. Moses Stith was appointed to the Pinellas County School

Board in 1977 by Florida Governor Rubin Askew, he was unsuccessful in his later bid for the seat. Similarly, in 1986, Effie Alexander, and in 1993 Mayme Hodges were unsuccessful in their bids for the Pinellas County School Board. Effie Alexander noted, “It’s not an easy race by any means. First, you may have to survive a countywide partisan primary. Democrats run against Democrats, and Republicans do the same in the primary. The winners go on to a countywide general election. That means you will need campaign volunteers countywide, as well as in 24 municipalities from the Sunshine Skyway to Tarpon Springs” (Peterman, October 10, 2005). For these reasons, multiple attempts for Blacks to be elected to the school board were unsuccessful. In 2002, Mary Brown became the first Black to be elected to the Pinellas County School Board.

There have also been very few Blacks from the City of St. Petersburg to serve in the state legislature. In 1982, Douglas Jamerson became the first Black person elected to the state legislature after a successful campaign for single-member voting districts. Later in 2000, thirty-two years after his father won a primary race, but lost in the general election, Frank Peterman was elected to the Florida House of Representatives.

Protest, Strikes, and Other Civil Disturbances

Black communities have long engaged in protest, strikes and civil disturbances in pursuit of equitable opportunities, and to address injustice in the criminal-legal system. In the aftermath of Congress enacting the Civil Rights Act, violence occurred between Black and White patrons of the Barrel drive-in, which was located on 401 16th Street, a White hangout on the edge of the Black neighborhood of Methodist Town. (Peck & Wilson, 2006). According to Hartzell’s (2005) article, the drive-in became the focus of racial tension when Black teens requested and obtained service. He noted, “But teen versus teen tension escalated during July 1964, resulting in several arrests of teens on both sides” (Hartzell, 2005, para 15).

In 1968 city sanitation workers went on strike for better pay, benefits, and working conditions (Paulson & Stiff, 1979). The strike was not planned but was the result of broken promises. Sanitation workers developed a plan to save the city money with the intent that the workers would benefit from the savings. The plan saved the city close to \$300,000 but city officials only paid the workers 5 cents an hour more (Paulson & Stiff, 1979). The strike lasted 116 days, from May to August, which time racial tensions exploded in various ways. There were death threats against sanitation crew chief Joe Savage (who led many marches), street violence, and fire bombings resulting in property damage for White and Black residents. In mid-August, the city's Black neighborhoods suffered through four days of arson, gunshots and rock and bottle throwing. Police in riot gear walked the street. An armored anti-riot tank was used to shoot tear gas and hundreds of young Blacks were arrested. A civil emergency was declared. The strikers lost their seniority, sick leave, and vacation benefits. However, the strike is seen as a milestone in local civil rights history. Blacks united over the issue and learned how to negotiate with the city and the City Council passed a law allowing the workers to form a union that was established in 1970.

Protest also occurred in St. Petersburg in October, 1996 in response to the shooting of 18-year-old TyRon Lewis, a young Black man, during a traffic stop by a white police officer (Klockars et al., 2007). Two nights of rioting, rock-throwing and fires ensued—and protests erupted again when a grand jury refused to indict the officer 21 days later and ruled the shooting justifiable.

The use of protest has continued into recent times. In 2018 members of the community voiced concerns at the City Council based on the perception of criminalization of Blackness during the annual Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day celebrations (Roldan, 2018; Paluska, 2018;

Smiley & Fakunle, 2016). More recently, residents of St. Petersburg participated in rallies protesting the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer (DeGregory, June 7, 2020). The long history of frustration expressed through protests and rallies highlight the ongoing need to remedy negative and harmful interactions that Black residents have with the criminal-legal system and its representatives.

Access to Economic Opportunity in St. Petersburg

Prior to the establishment of the City of St. Petersburg, government-sponsored wealth building opportunities were not offered to Blacks. Even if the earliest Black residents of the territory had not been enslaved, it is unlikely it would have made a difference in their ability to access economic development programs. Florida was one of the southern states that imposed strict limits on the ability of non-enslaved Blacks to acquire property during the antebellum period. In Florida, “In 1856 an amendment to this law imposed a penalty of \$100 to \$500 upon any person who entered into a business deal with a free negro without the consent of his guardian” (Pensacola News Journal, May 14, 1939, p.7). For instance, although John Donaldson was able to acquire 40 acres of land, there are no records indicating he received sponsored governmental support to increase his economic wealth. The first instance, we found of local government officials providing wealth-building assets to Blacks was in 1946 when the City of St. Petersburg engineered a program to gift 650 parcels of land to World War II veterans for homebuilding. Though more than 2,000 African Americans from St. Petersburg served in World War II, only 10 Black veterans were awarded land parcels under the program. The other 595 parcels all went to White veterans.

The White population benefitted from the land grants beginning in 1842, government-backed financing in 1886, and the sale of discounted land to developers beginning in 1881. Once

the town of St. Petersburg was formally established in 1892, city officials began establishing economic development programs that included public investments in amenities, infrastructure, and institutions for the exclusive use of the city's White residents.

White private sector interests would remain the sole beneficiaries of government-sponsored economic development programs for 140 years after the first land grant made to a White settler on the lower peninsula. Governmental agencies did invest in various programs that touched the lives of African Americans in St. Petersburg over those years. Yet, economic development investments, such as those designed by local government officials to enrich and incent private sector interests - remained an exclusively White domain until about 1982 when the City of St. Petersburg began setting goals for purchasing goods and services from minority business enterprises (MBEs).

By the end of the civil rights era in 1968, public officials had seeded and sponsored real estate development and infrastructure investments of over \$2 billion (in 2021 values) to attract, incent and enrich the financial interests of white investors, developers, entrepreneurs and property owners who were seen as vital to the growth of an ever-ripening city economy. As of 2021, public investments to develop St. Petersburg's historically Black areas had not reached anywhere near the same level. More to the point of present racial economic gaps, over the 180 years since the first land grants to early settlers, research has identified dozens of development projects involving hundreds of millions of dollars of public investment benefitting white-owned enterprises, but has not yet uncovered a single instance when City officials seeded a development project for the purpose of enriching a Black-owned for-profit venture, or with the side-effect of doing so.

Land Grants to Settlers

The Congressional Armed Occupation Act of 1842 may have been the first government-backed economic development initiative of significance to operate in the area that later became St. Petersburg (Covington, 1961). The Act opened the Indian lands of central and southern Florida to homesteading. Any settler who agreed to build a house, clear five acres, plant crops, and live on his property for five years was granted 160 acres of land and one year's rations. A handful of settlers took advantage of the law. They included Dr. Odet Philippe, a Frenchman and reported former slave trader, who settled the St. Helena plantation in the Safety Harbor area with several slaves in tow (DeFoor, 1990). Antonio Maximo Hernandez, a Spaniard who was nevertheless identified as a White man by his contemporaries, was awarded a special land grant for his service during the Seminole War of 1836-1838 (Bash, 1983). Hernandez operated a fishing rancho in the Maximo Point area (perhaps because Maximo was the more racially acceptable name to local authorities and settlers).

Despite the Spanish and Native heritage of the territory's earliest occupants (long pre-dating White settlement), St. Petersburg's founders upheld and enshrined a White-washed version of history. A 1926 feature story in the *St. Petersburg Times*, under the headline "Few White Men Braved Danger to Get Riches," acknowledges that ... "Spanish people were living...here and there along the coast, for many years before Florida was ceded to the United States," yet the "first authentic settlement on lower Pinellas peninsula was in 1843" (*St. Petersburg Times*, March 21, 1926, Section 17, p. 8) by a White man (Figure 3).

Figure 3

St. Petersburg Times, March 21, 1926, Section 17, p. 8.



Discounted Land for Speculation and Development

In addition to land grants, government officials sold tens of thousands of acres of land on the Pinellas Peninsula at heavily discounted prices, to White settlers, speculators, and developers. In 1876, over 1,500 such acres came into the possession of John C. Williams, one of the founding fathers of St. Petersburg, whose land holdings ultimately encompassed much of the in utero City of St. Petersburg by the late 1870s. Hamilton Disston, founder of Disston City (now the City of Gulfport) bought four million acres of land from the State of Florida for a price of \$1 million in 1881 dollars (equal to \$6.69 per acre in 2021 dollars) (Knetsch, 1998). Disston's purchase included 150,000 acres on the Pinellas Peninsula. He later granted 60,000 acres to Russian-born Peter Demens on the condition that the latter extend his Orange Belt Railway into Pinellas (Davis, 1939; Hawes, 1989). Demens also received 250 acres of prime waterfront land from Williams in exchange for extending the railroad to 2nd Street and building a wharf that could accommodate larger boats.

Government-Backed Development Financing

Demens, along with other railroad magnates and industry titans of the era built their fortunes with the grist of government-backed financing. As one local example: the state-authorized Orange Belt Railway charter enabling the line's extension to present-day downtown St. Petersburg, also empowered the company to sell \$700,000 worth of railway bonds (today's equivalent of \$20.3 million) to finance the project. Separately, Demens was promised a 25,000-acre land grant for completing the extension but missed a deadline for claiming the boon (Parry, 1983). He would have needed to complete the Orange Belt Railway's St. Petersburg terminus by December 1887 to take ownership of the land. Prior to Demens, government policy had enhanced capital access for small-scale landowners in the area as well. This was via the Armed Occupation Act land grants, which provided collateral against which to raise capital for future enterprise.

Public Investment in Whites-Only Amenities, Institutions, and Infrastructure

Government infrastructure investments to build out the Pinellas Peninsula possibly date to 1848 with the construction of the Egmont Key Lighthouse (Thompson & Thompson, 2012; Stafford, 1980). The pace of infrastructure development quickened after the completion of the Orange Belt Railway in 1889 and the incorporation of St. Petersburg as a town in 1892. Over the 120 years that followed construction of the lighthouse (through 1968), public coffers expended over \$2 billion to fund or subsidize the construction of transportation routes; a picturesque downtown waterfront; segregated educational institutions such as St. Petersburg High School and St. Petersburg Junior College; "whites only" parks, beaches, and recreation facilities; commercial infrastructure to pave the way for white entrepreneurs to prosper; and healthcare and other edifices that African Americans could typically only enter when working, if at all.

The one exception was the local jail, the first of which was built under the authority of the inaugural town council shortly after being formed in 1892. Its cells were open to receive Black prisoners and arrestees since the inception of local law enforcement practices in St. Petersburg. Racial disparities in public investments in economic development, public amenities and infrastructure continued well into the latter half of the 20th century, which had a profound impact in stunting the economic growth of Blacks in St. Petersburg.

The G.I. Bill

From 1946 to 1963 St. Petersburg's White middle class blossomed through the twin engines of the G.I. Bill which provided subsidized homebuyer loans to millions of veterans and local segregationist development practices that ensured that the city's construction boom would benefit White residents primarily. Thus, the growth of the Black middle class in St. Petersburg was not as fast due to lack of funding and discriminatory practices (Onkst, 1998).

Railroad and Construction Industry

The railroad and construction industry contributed to economic booms for the Black communities. During 1912-1914, the economy grew by leaps and bounds with the addition of hundreds of new businesses and public buildings including the opening of the city municipal gas plant (Arsenault, 2017). Black labor was crucial to the economy. For instance, in 1913 Black laborers built a seawall on the downtown waterfront, and between 1921-1926 Black workers were recruited from Georgia and Alabama to address the building boom of the time. During the next decade, at least seven commercial properties were erected on the historic 10-block corridor later nicknamed "The Deuces," including Mercy Hospital and the Manhattan Casino. Real estate developers – Black and White – built clusters of single and multi-family housing units in the surrounding areas.

Sports

Sports also had the potential to generate revenue for the Black community, although it was not immediate. For instance, the Spring of 1914 marked the arrival of major league baseball as a center for spring training. This would not bear fruit until the granting of an expansion team in 1995 and the playing of the first game as the Devil Rays in 1998 (Augustyn, 2020).

Thus, although economic opportunities exist, Blacks are often not afforded the same opportunities for advancement when compared to their White counterparts. These inequities may be due in part to economic segregation practices that exist within the city.

Economic Pressure Tactics by Segregationists

St. Petersburg's segregationist groups campaigned on multiple fronts to block integration efforts, often resorting to economic pressures and boycotts to push their point. Tactics included the years-long practice by city leaders of using the threat to tourism revenues, if Blacks were allowed entry into White spaces, as a rationale for perpetuating Jim Crow. Civic and elected leaders used the same rationale in other spheres, reminding people that Whites would not continue to patronize facilities where Blacks had equal access. For instance, the Citizens Council group asked City Council to "take a firm and courageous stand to keep segregation on the public buses" (St. Petersburg Times, June 22, 1956, p.19). In a letter to Mayor Samuel G. Johnson and the City Council, the pro-segregation group said: "It is our opinion that if integration takes place, the majority of transients would refuse to ride" (St. Petersburg Times, June 22, 1956, p.19). The letter was signed by Mrs. James E. Thomas as vice president of the group. Mrs. Thomas was a firebrand for the cause who represented St. Petersburg at a statewide confab of Citizens Councils throughout Florida in 1957 and reported to be in "frequent correspondence with Atty. Gen.

Richard Ervin and Gov. LeRoy Collins” (St. Petersburg Times, February 4, 1957, p.22) and assured the group that “Mr. Ervin is for us” (St. Petersburg Times, February 4, 1957, p.22).

Thomas’ peers in the movement initiated economic boycott strategies as well. The media reports separate boycott drives in 1956, 1957 and 1958, that in addition to leveling economic punishments at the Black community, also called for boycotts of Whites who sympathized with Blacks in any way. An anonymous pamphlet distributed to White business owners in 1957 urged:

A boycott of restaurants employing Negro cooks; refusing to employ Negroes if Whites are available; don’t hire a Negro or help him in any way if he belongs to the NAACP; discharge of White teachers who want to teach Negroes; boycott of theatres which show race “mixing”; “don’t attend any church that approves of mixing with the Negro”; refusing to trade with a merchant that wants to mix with the Negro.(St. Petersburg Times, October 1, 1957, p. 3B)

The campaign’s eighth mandate was social ostracization of Whites who mixed socially with Blacks. The pamphlet urged “Any White person that wants to mix with the Negro socially, don’t even give him the time of day.” (St. Petersburg Times, October 1, 1957, p3B). The following year, a better organized boycott effort distributed flyers to local businesses urging them not to hire Black workers “unless it is absolutely necessary, and no White person can be obtained for the job ”(Figure 4).

Figure 4

St. Petersburg Times, June 16, 1958, p.28

**Economic Segregation**

Economic segregation, like residential segregation, was rigidly enforced as custom in St. Petersburg by 1900, but it hardened into law by 1931 when the city charter prohibited Blacks from establishing a business or living in areas designated for Whites. Much is written about the 1931 city charter that enshrined housing segregation into the city policy. It is seldom remembered that the same charter also prohibited Blacks from establishing a business in White areas; and it has never been acknowledged that housing segregation served as the second biggest contributor (in local public policies) to the vast racial wealth gap that existed in St. Petersburg by the time racial integration efforts began.

The 1920 St. Petersburg Police department edict that "all White men found in the negro section late at night regardless of their age or social distinction" (Arsenault, 2017, p. 125), had the effect of legally limiting Black enterprise to a primarily Black clientele. Segregation inevitably capped the growth potential of Black entrepreneurs, relegating them to only a 4%

market share of consumer spending in St. Petersburg in 1920, and an estimated 0.5% of business-to-business spending (United States Bureau of the Census, 1973). This racial economic order was upheld over decades through various tactics that sometimes included violence and intimidation. But more often than not, the city's White elite maintained political control of the city's opportunity structure. In all decisions involving resources and who would benefit from them, elected officials invariably empowered the status quo, ensuring that Black residents remained economically marginalized, and that economic opportunity remained an exclusively White domain.

If the racial balance was ever in jeopardy, White city leaders and vigilantes battled back by means that ranged from Billy clubs to court battles. For example, in 1921 the Dream Theater for Blacks was bombed with dynamite after White resistance to the theater's location on the periphery of a White neighborhood (St. Petersburg Times, November 26, 1921, p.1). This and other violence and intimidation gave public notice to Blacks that there would be consequences if they attempted to live and do business outside the boundaries set for them by the White power structure.

In all decisions involving public resources (and who would control and benefit from them), elected officials invariably empowered the status quo, ensuring that Black residents remained economically marginalized, and that economic opportunity remained an exclusively White domain. As outlined earlier, the city's White elite reinforced their political dominance and influence on economic decision making throughout the 1920s, in part under the auspices of the St. Petersburg KKK Klavern, known as the Olustee No. 20 chapter. For instance, in 1924, Jim Coad, Secretary of the St. Petersburg Chamber and founding member of St. Petersburg's KKK chapter, successfully lobbied for the erection of signs on the Gandy Bridge that read "Gentiles

Only Wanted. No Jews Wanted Here” (Wilson, 2002). This had the effect of siphoning away a substantial portion of Black consumer spending as some Jewish merchants and business owners barred or marginalized in many White areas opted to make their living among Blacks. It was during this decade (the 1920s) when the city’s Black economy became recognizable as such through the forces of segregation.

Even before the St. Petersburg City Council made segregation the law of the land, developers and neighborhood groups had prohibited Black families from moving into White areas. Throughout 1920s, virtually all the city's new housing subdivisions imposed restrictive covenants or gentleman's agreements to exclude Black residents, even middle-class Blacks, with clauses such as "No lot shall be sold, rented or conveyed to any colored person or person of African descent” (Arsenault, 2017, p.207) Many of these clauses remained in force, unchallenged, until the 1970s. The censure led Black entrepreneurs to build their own.

By 1920, there was a tiny but noticeable Black middle-class and a burgeoning Black developer community. Historian Ray Arsenault (2017) quantified their ranks as follows:

In 1920, the local Black labor force included eighteen teachers, ten grocery store owners, seven barbers, seven tailors, six ministers, four insurance agents, four restaurant owners, two doctors, one dentist, and one hospital superintendent.

Collectively, these middle-class occupations accounted for 6.7 percent of the local Black working population. (Arsenault, 2017, p.126).

By 1930, the city had some 60 Black-owned business establishments, including five hotels that catered to their racial kin. This was in addition to Black entrepreneurs without a retail or office location, such as landlords and contractors. In 1940, Black leaders from St. Petersburg and Tampa created the region’s second chapter of the Negro Business League. A small Black investor class

emerged, exemplified by affluents such as Dr. Robert Swain and working men like John Clayton who purchased his first grocery store in 1938 and by 1944 owned the corner of Fairfield and 21st Street (3 homes and 2 apartments). By 1954, Dr. Swain was part-owner in two hotels, a mortuary, a pharmacy and soda shop, all catering to black patrons.

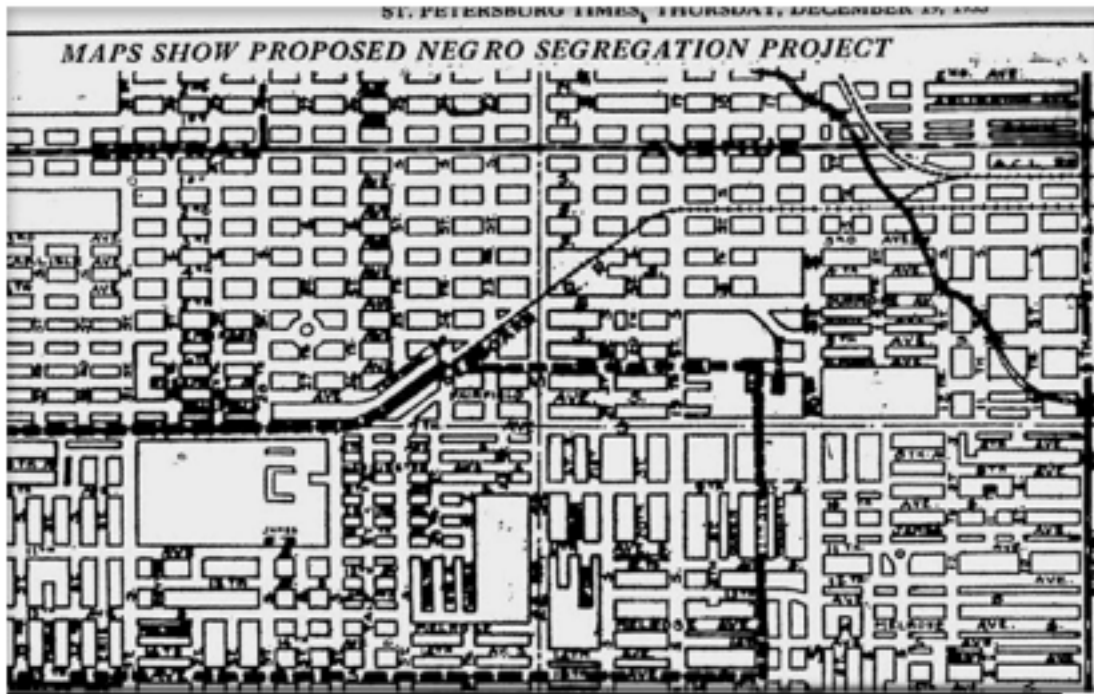
The number of Black-owned businesses grew enough to warrant a “Negro Business Guide” in 1951. The 1953-54 edition was 12 pages long. Also in 1953, Black owned firms joined forces to form the Sunshine City Business League, aided which was aided by the all-white St. Petersburg Merchants Association in securing its charter (St. Petersburg Times, May 29, 1953).

Nevertheless, the disparities in wealth gap grew significantly between the 1930s and 1960s due to redlining and the difficulty of obtaining insurance. In 1934, the practice of redlining was institutionalized following the creation of the national Homeowner’s Loan Corporation, which drafted “Security Maps” marking Black neighborhoods as hazardous (Vatelot, 2019). This led to the systematic denial of insurance to residents of specific neighborhoods and curtailed the flow of development and homebuyer capital to redlined areas for decades to come. Owing to this and subsequent federal and local policy, St. Petersburg’s White-Black wealth gap ballooned over the next 30 years.

In 1936, in wake of the federal policy, St. Petersburg leaders went further to seal the boundaries of Black life in St. Petersburg. City Council voted four-to-one to approve a resolution by Councilman Milledge Wever, requiring Blacks to live in an area that ran 17 blocks from east to west and nine blocks north to south. Figure 5 illustrates the Proposed Negro Segregation Project published by the St. Petersburg Times in 1935.

Figure 5

St. Petersburg Times, December 19, 1935: Map of Proposed Negro Segregation Project, Section 2, p.4.



Commentators of the day saw the city's rabid segregationist push as an answer to rising racial tensions due to rapid Black population growth in the city, combined with pressures to protect the tourism-dependent economy. A visible Black populace was seen as bad for business. Thus, historical artifacts illustrated economic segregation impacted Black business opportunities and restricted their clientele. It also devalued the property value of Black communities since they were perceived as hazardous and bad for business.

Critical Findings on the Impact of Economic Segregation

- Policies by city officials controlled Black workforce economic progress including convict labor loan and leasing programs, local governmental pay disparities for Black workers, and informal but rigidly imposed limits to employment promotions.

- The City Council legalized and officially imposed market limits for Black entrepreneurs, including license exclusions for some occupations, city-sanctioned contract limitations for Black-owned firms in the construction industry, and hugely disproportionate crackdowns and arrests for illegal business activities by Black versus White entrepreneurs.
- The suppression of Black wealth-building through homeownership via locally enforced residential segregation policies limited the value of owned homes in segregated Black areas, while preventing Black homebuying and building in White areas of St. Petersburg.
- Displacements and relocations of Blacks, engineered by government agencies over five decades, impacted 12 times more Black-led families, organizations, and businesses compared to the impact in White areas of the city.

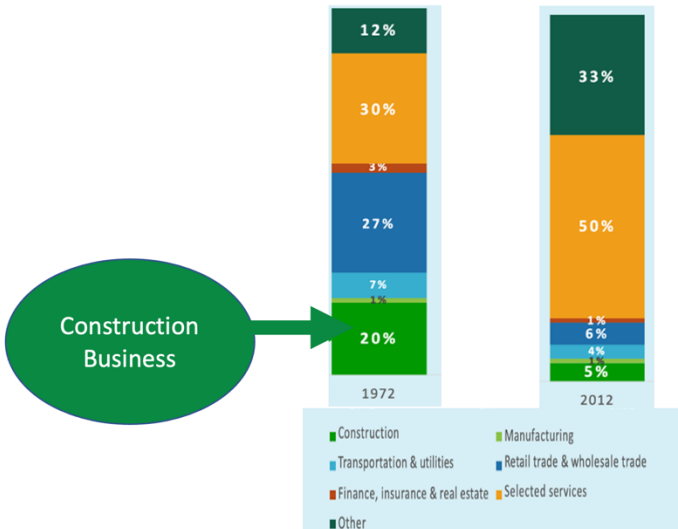
The Impact of the Civil Rights Act on Black Businesses

In the 1960s, due to federal regulations that eliminated discriminatory practices, people began to leave the area, which impacted the viability of many businesses (Simner, 2017). For instance, the number of barber shops on 22nd Street went from 10 in 1963 to 4 in 1983. While the representation of lawyers, furniture stores, fish markets, hotels, shoe stores, physicians, and dentists became nonexistent on 22nd Street between 1963 and 1983 (Simner, 2017).

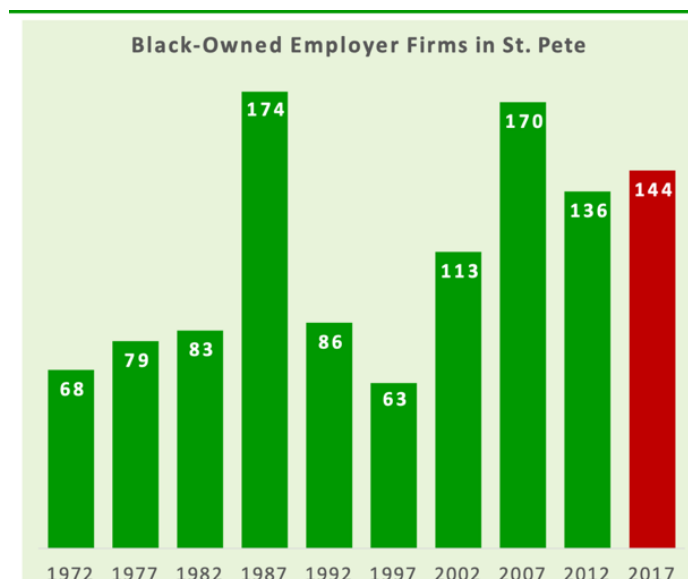
Similar economic decline was noticed in other businesses beyond 22nd Street, such as construction, finance, and transportation. One of the biggest changes, was a dramatic shrinkage of the construction sector between 1972-2012 (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Construction Business 1972–2021



Over four decades minimal growth occurred in the number of Black-owned firms in St. Petersburg. Indeed, the number of Black-owned firms with paid workers on staff has not grown appreciably over the decades. As of the latest census data, St. Petersburg still has not reclaimed its 1987 peak in Black-owned employer firms (Figure 7). The spike in 1987 was a result of affirmative action.

Figure 7*Black-Owned Employers 1972–2017*

Disparity in City Procurement and Contracting

Black-owned businesses were almost entirely excluded from doing business with the City of St. Petersburg for the first 90 years of its existence. The City created a Minority Business Enterprise (MBE) program in 1982, becoming one of the first municipalities in the region to do so. Following adoption of a new MBE ordinance, City staff began to set goals for MBE spending on City purchasing of goods and services. In 1985, the City expanded the program to set goals for public construction projects on case-by-case basis. By then, the City had spent hundreds of millions of dollars procuring goods and services from white-owned businesses.

It appears from media reports that City leaders did not fully exclude African Americans from serving as vendors prior to 1982. Media reports show expenditures in 1905 to one of the city's earliest Black businessmen, Elder Jordan, Sr.. Yet, City contracting with Black-owned firms was exceedingly rare in those days, and has remained so ever since, except for a brief 17

years when the City maintained its MBE program (1982 to 1999). Expenditures to African Americans appear to have been less than 1% of City expenditures in 1905, judging solely by January and February City spending reports that appeared in the daily newspaper. Jordan was paid the modern-day equivalent of \$187 for hauling and alley cleaning services over those two months.

In April 2021, the situation was little changed, according to a Disparity Study commissioned by the City to confirm whether a statistical disparity exists between the availability of minority- and women-owned businesses, and the rate at which the City purchases from those businesses (Mason Tillman Associates Ltd, 2021). The analysis, by California's Mason Tillman Associates, confirmed a disparity in both the prime contracts and subcontracts awarded by the City during the study period (October 1, 2014, to September 30, 2018), and found that African Americans were the most underutilized by the City's SBE program. Across all prime contracts by the City in construction, professional services and other goods and services, 88% of contracts went to white men versus only 1.6 %to Black-owned firms. The difference was even more stark among the City's most highly used vendors. White males won over 99% of the 826 contracts that went to the 57 most used firms. Not a single African American firm was in this group. As a result of its findings, Mason Tillman recommended that the City create a race- and gender-conscious program to remedy the disparity.

Development of Black Housing Communities

Over the past century Black communities grew in St. Petersburg. Expansion started with Pepper Town (1888-1989), Cooper Quarters (1890-1900), and Methodist Town (1894), and grew with the development of the Deuces (1920s), Jordan Park (1939), Bartlett Park (late 1920s-

1930s), and Childs Park (1920s-1940s) (City of St. Petersburg Neighborhood Partnership Office, 1998).

In the 1920s, 22nd Street South, “The Deuces”, was emerging as the hub of the southside Black community. It was a business, residential, professional, and entertainment district. It was home to the Manhattan Casino, Mercy Hospital, the Royal Theater, and was in close proximity to Jordan Park housing project and Jordan Elementary School. The Deuces was the Black community’s equivalent to downtown Central Avenue. The Deuces had its own medical row with two pharmacies, six medical doctors and another three doctors were located nearby.

In 1939, the construction began on Jordan Park, which is located between 9th and 13th Avenues South and just west of 22nd street. It was the city's first Black public housing complex. From the onset, there were complaints against Jordan Park. For example, the first Jordan Park resident arrived on April 10, 1940, and within the same year, there were several cases in which plaintiffs attacked the legality of fixed water and gas rates for Jordan Park residents. On January 8, 1941, there was a court case in which forty-four plaintiffs were seeking to enjoin the city from carrying out Phase 2 of the Jordan Park project, which sought to add 204 new apartment units. The City Council issued a series of rulings designed to block construction of Phase 2 of the Jordan Park Public Housing development. “Local slumlords and other opponents of public housing were jubilant, but the City Council's apparent obstructionism ultimately triggered a citywide protest led by the League of Women Voters” (Arsenault, 2017, p. 270) and backed by the Chamber of Commerce, the Merchants' Association, the Board of Realtors, and the Urban League.

The campaign collected more than 4,000 signatures and forced City Council to submit the question to the electorate in a September 24th 1941 referendum. Opponents “attacked public

housing as a socialistic challenge to free enterprise and a threat to White supremacy” (Arsenault, 2017, p. 272) and attempted to “manipulate antiradical and Negrophobic sentiment” (Arsenault, 2017, p. 272). Yet supporters of the development carried the referendum by 2,731 to 2,081 votes. Thus, despite objections, the second phase of Jordan Park was completed. In 1999 the demolition of Jordan Park began as work started on Hope VI, a controversial new housing project built on the site.

The fight for public housing did not cease. In 1949, White owners of Black rental properties mounted a campaign against the City accepting federal dollars to finance 475 units of public housing (250 for Black residents and 225 for Whites). They won with 51% of the vote. While in 1955, the City Council voted down a proposal by developer Richard Deeb that would have been the largest ever undertaken to alleviate the Black housing crisis (St. Petersburg Times, June 8, 1955). The proposed upscale development was put forth in response to a study by the city’s Interracial Advisory Committee on the problem of congestion in Black communities. The project was called Martin Shores. It would have brought 1,000 single family homes, four blocks of apartments over 360 acres, a motel, a school, a health clinic, two churches, and a shopping center. City Council initially favored the project and passed the zoning application on its first reading, but later rescinded support in the face of “a toxic word-of-mouth campaign” (Wilson, 2009, p. 62) by White opponents who claimed the project would lower property values.

Similarly, in 1963, 400 individuals protested public housing for low-income retirees (Henderson, May 23, 1963). They were subsequently joined by 230 individuals, who blatantly brought concerns about race, and that the presence of Black people will devalue their homes (St Petersburg Times, May 29, 1963). This opposition to housing for the elderly occurred even though other Florida cities have approved, have under construction, or completed housing for the

elderly (Henderson, June 2, 1963). Vice Mayor Nortney Cox opposed the proposal and suggested that all future plans for public housing should be voted on by a referendum (Henderson, June 1, 1963). Even with public opposition, the Housing Authority Chairman announced a plan to proceed with providing public housing for low-income retirees. Subsequently, Senator C.W. Bill Young passed a bill forbidding federal housing projects without the approval of affected freeholders (St Petersburg Times, June 15, 1963).

In 1960, after months of talks, Black leaders reached a verbal agreement with the City Planning Director, for a large-scale non-segregated housing development that would alleviate the housing shortage for Blacks and others. But White developers and citizens pushed back and favored a segregated sub-division. Subsequently, the project idled and ultimately died on the drawing board. Together with the disparity in the City of St. Petersburg's distribution of free parcels of land for homebuilding to veterans of World War II, when only 10 of 105 Black veterans were awarded lots, compared with 595 lots awarded to White veterans, the bias process of housing determinations that have contributed to the wealth inequities between Black and White residents is unmistakable (Onkst, 1998). Throughout the years of record-setting construction in White neighborhoods, local officials have done little to abate the desperate need for housing and minimum housing standards in Black neighborhoods. The stalemate was widely believed to be a product of open collusion between slum lords and city leaders.

In 1975, the practice of redlining was also blamed for lack of loans to purchase homes in certain areas. Thus, Sen. William Proxmire, D-Wisconsin, sponsored a bill that required banks to disclose the amount of mortgage funded and the amount of saving deposits collected by zip code (Feinsilber, May 21, 1975). In addition to redlining, the non-availability of property insurance also impeded home ownership. Thus, in 1993 two bills were passed to address the practice of

insurance redlining in urban real estate markets, namely: The Anti-Redlining in Insurance Disclosure Act (H.R. 1188) that passed the House energy committee, and bill H.R. 1257 that passed the banking committee (Harney, 1993). Both bills would require insurance companies to disclose business revenue generated each year by areas (Harney, 1993).

Nevertheless, on July 20, 1994, by a voice vote, the house defeated a bill approved by its banking committee that had the strong support of consumer, civil rights, and housing groups concerned about discriminatory home insurance practices in urban markets around the country. The measure would have applied some of the racial and locational data gathering and public disclosure requirements on the insurance industry that the banking industry must comply with under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act (HMDA) and the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA). Instead, they passed a “toothless bill” (Harney, 1994, p. 8D) that did virtually nothing to curb central city redlining in home insurance policy availability, pricing, or coverage. (Harney, 1994).

Slum-Like Housing Conditions

Despite urgent reports of dangerous, crowded and slum-like housing conditions in Black neighborhoods by the federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) in 1940, the city planning department in 1943, and the National Urban League in 1945, development investments in Black St. Petersburg were negligible, compared to the hundreds of millions of dollars being poured into other parts of St. Petersburg, from public and private coffers. By 1940, African Americans made up 20% of St. Pete’s fast-growing population but were crowded into areas that comprised only 4% of its landmass. At that point in time, 59% of the city’s Black households had no electricity versus only 2% of White households. There was a stark contrast to conditions in White neighborhoods, especially during the post-WWII development boom. Developers fueled

construction of an average of 13 new homes per day across the city in the 1950s. Over the decade, “46,679 houses went up, marking the city’s busiest home-building decade before or since” (Wilson, 2009, p.4). During this era, city officials and private sector leaders continued shaping local policies and resource investments to favor the economic advancement of White residents.

In the 1950s, two mayors, Samuel Johnson and John Burroughs, appointed urban renewal committees that produced reports on slum conditions in Black neighborhoods but generated no remedial action. In 1956, a local newspaper reported that nothing was being done to address slum landlord conditions because of the influence of the landlords and tax policies. The article stated,

‘The majority of the owners are persons of political, financial and social power in this community, and a few are past officials of the City Government’. The Committee further noted that tax policies actually place an incentive for blight and disrepair. (St. Petersburg Times, June 9, 1956, p.4)

The infrastructure of homes in Black neighborhoods was viewed as a significant safety concern. For instance, Fire Chief S.O. Griffith told a reporter:

I pray every time there’s a wind...Only the good Lord has prevented a fire in any of the Negro areas...Some of these shacks don’t even have city water...we’ve had to wet down a whole row of buildings to keep flames from spreading many a time ...and what do we do the day we get simultaneous big fires in Methodist Town and near 22nd Street?

(Wilson, 2009, p.97).

At the time, Griffith reported, approximately half of all department calls came from Black neighborhoods. Ultimately, the poor housing infrastructures in Black neighborhoods contributed not just to safety concerns but to loss of life.

The Housing Integration Era.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, racial integration began to pierce the formerly impervious borders of residential segregation in St. Petersburg. The dispersion of African Americans happened in distinct phases. At first, many African Americans who choose to leave the city's historically-Black enclaves opted to move to adjacent or nearby neighborhoods formerly restricted to whites. That prompted an immediate and fervent exodus by whites.

As the St. Petersburg Times (June 21, 1971) reported,

In 1964, the white flight from the core city was in full progress, a phenomenon common to cities of comparable size all across the nation. There was a lesson to be learned there, from cities where demography had matured earlier than St. Petersburg's, where the results of the exodus already could be seen. In their wake they left slums and the life-style of crime, ignorance and despair that accompany any slum. (p.1C)

Indeed, the transformation was rapid in those newly-Black border areas. The border areas loss their relatively higher-income white occupants and the white flight also resulted in rapid-fire zoning changes that transformed former single-family homes to multi-family rental properties, and in the process, created clusters of low-income housing and Black poverty where they did not previously exist.

The St. Petersburg Times (February 3, 1972) captured James Sanderlin, the county's first African American judge, describing the process at a 1972 forum:

“When the “sold” sign goes up and the first black family moves into a white neighborhood, the zoning laws for the neighborhood suddenly change... the black move into white areas first brings a new crop of “For Sale” signs after real estate brokers urge whites to sell. ...Next says Sanderlin, zoning laws begin to change as contractors urge residents to convert what maybe one-family housing to multi-family dwellings. “The result is a series of very rapid zoning changes,” Sanderlin says. “There is a greater density then in that area.” (February 3, 1972, p. 17B).

The housing integration process happened differently in areas farther removed from the former segregated Black neighborhoods. For one, Black integration to higher-priced, all-white neighborhoods such as Lakewood Estates, Shore Acres and Pinellas Point didn’t begin until the 1970s, and then only at a trickle. Despite the snail pace, the pioneer Blacks who ventured to the more white areas often met with the racist ire of their new neighbors. Whites were no longer able to rely on City policy (formal or informal) to guard their sanctum. They resorted instead to expressing their displeasure through racist slights and offenses.

Integration wasn’t the only force at work in reshaping the socioeconomics of the city’s segregation era Black neighborhoods. Like many legacy Black communities across the nation, St. Petersburg’s African American would undergo decades of disinvestment, initiated by urban renewal strategies that unfolded at the same time as desegregation began to hollow out the formerly captive Black consumer market that fueled Black business growth for decades.

Housing Segregation in 2021.

After 50 years of racial integration of St. Petersburg’s neighborhoods, the city remains one of the most racially segregated large cities in the United States. St. Petersburg ranks number 44 on the “Most to Least Segregated Cities, 2019” by the Other & Belonging Institute (2021) at

UC Berkeley. The most recent Census data available show that roughly 76% of the city's Black population resides in the 25-square mile area known as South St. Petersburg. Over one-quarter of the city's census tracts have an African American population of 5% or less, and 40% of census tracts (29) have Black populations of 10% or less.

Urban Renewal, Tropicana Field, and Interstate 275.

Black-owned businesses were impacted by multiple government-led mass displacements that ultimately disrupted and partly destroyed the enclaves of African American commerce that took shape during segregation. One of the most widely known incidents happened in the formerly segregated Black neighborhood known as "Gas Plant." In 1979, the City approved a plan to redevelop the area with commercial spaces that would create 680 jobs paying \$20 million in wages (in 2021 dollars) plus construction jobs over seven years to rehabilitate and build new homes for 1,000+ people. But the plan was shelved by 1986, when City Council voted to build a baseball stadium instead, which would bulldoze 285 buildings, relocate nine churches and 500 households, uproot organizations such as the Masons, and disrupt a sizable share of the city's Black-owned business establishments. The project would demolish over 80 investment properties, many Black-owned, and cause 40 businesses to move or close. The Gas Plant redevelopment was the seventh mass displacement, over a dozen years, that relocated 2,100 Black families, businesses, and institutions from their homes in the city's segregation-era Black neighborhoods.

Therefore, the Gas Plant Urban renewal and the construction of Tropicana Field erased neighborhoods, housing, and economic viability for the Black community, particularly related to cost and property taxes. In an email response to interview questions for this study, one resident expressed the sentiments of many, advising, "Stop trying to build high rises for the rich. Focus

on building equity for the people on the ground” (Resident 9, e-mail correspondence, May 6, 2021).

The Black community was also impacted by the phased construction of Highway I-275 which sliced through the heart of the Black community, razing homes, businesses, and churches; severing the beloved Gibbs High from areas housing hundreds of its alumni; dead-ending the high-traffic 15th Avenue corridor; and destroying historic properties such as the Ponder House. The construction of I-275 over nearly a 50-year period between 1970 and 2016 uprooted many Black families in the Methodist Town, Gas Plant and 22nd Street neighborhoods.

Officials tried to quell Black leaders’ complaints by pointing out that I-275 dislocated 900 white households too. But there was no honest comparison. Despite being only 16% of the population, twice as many African Americans were displaced per square mile of highway (201 Black households versus 98 white households).

The community would never return to its heyday when most every Black family was part of the communal life of church, school, commerce, and service. As one indicator of the damage done, the Census showed a rapid drop in the number of black-owned employer firms in St. Petersburg, from 174 in 1987 to 86 by 1992. The city still has not reclaimed that peak. The latest data show 144 Black-owned employer firms in the city.

Voices of Residents who lived in the Gas Plant Neighborhood

The residents of the Gas Plant neighborhood viewed their community as family oriented. Older community members served as role models and often offered guidance to younger residents. Below are selections from shared narratives of residents, describing their lived experiences in the Gas Plant Neighborhood.

- **Rev. Watson Haynes, II**

“I lived at 1543 3rd Avenue South, right behind First Baptist Institutional Church which was on the corner of 3rd Avenue and 16th Street South. There were seven of us and my mother worked six days a week making \$7 a day. When we had to move for “economic development purposes” a deacon from our church came to my mother and said I want you to have my house and helped her to buy his home and we moved to 2004 25th Street South. The Gas Plant Neighborhood was a family. We had doctors, dentists, and teachers in the neighborhood. One of the most influential people in my life was Rev. Enoch Davis. He would walk down 3rd Avenue to Webb’s City and one day he asked my mother if I could walk with him. My mother said yes and even though I really didn’t want to walk with this “ole” man it became a weekly ritual. Eventually, I looked forward to our ritual. He instilled stuff in me; not just our history but that he was concerned about me. He was giving back.”

- **Jean Miller Anderson Davies**

“I lived at 1429 Dixie Avenue South, which was between 14th and 16th Streets. When I think back, what impressed me most, although at the time I thought that we were just being isolated, is that we really had a well-developed community with almost everything in it that I access now within the greater St. Pete. We had grocery stores. We had a cemetery. We had a funeral home, we had our churches, there were shoeshine parlors, everything that you thought you needed was in the parameter of the Gas Plant area. And when I say the Gas Plant area, my mind goes from 7th Avenue to 1st Avenue South and from 16th Street to 9th Street or 8th Street because it was in those parameters where our community, our people and our churches and all that we had that we were accessing as the neighborhood was within those parameters.

And we had the Harlem theater. So, you went to the movies, you know, on Sunday or Saturday. The library, that was a godsend when they opened that branch of that library there.

And all Black books. Oh my God. It was just wonderful. And we learned how to use a library, how to catalog books. It was just a magical place. You could leave Davis Elementary, go to the library. I used it as my way of discovering the whole world. Oh, because I would read autobiographies and stories about somebody else's life. And it was a magical place for me, and I would stay there till five o'clock in the afternoon reading, imagining myself in another place other than my own neighborhood.”

- **Mordecai Walker**

“I lived at 1224 5th Avenue South on what is often referred to as “Sugar Hill.” Some of my neighbors were Bill Williams who owned a shoeshine business in downtown St. Petersburg; Dr. Benjamin Jones, a dentist; Edward and Mary McRae, the owners of McRae funeral home; and Mr. Lewis Dominis, an art teacher. I think we had a congenial neighborhood. We were like a big family. I don’t remember problems with crime.

Back then they had White only. I remember you could go to the pier, but you couldn't go inside. Right? When I came to St. Petersburg it was called the Million Dollar Pier. That’s what they called it. Yes, Black people could go and could drive around but you couldn't go in. In my opinion, moving from the Gas Plant area was a good thing. I mean, maybe the intent wasn't good. But if you remember, the soil in the area was contaminated. I think that maybe that wasn't their motive, but I think it was a good thing to get us away from there because it was against our health. So, I might not be the best to speak on that. But I think it was the greatest thing to happen from that standpoint.”

- **Mary Frances Brown Murph**

“I was born in Cairo, GA and moved to St. Petersburg at age 11. I lived at 1404 Dixie Avenue South in the Gas Plant area. My uncle, Arthur Brown, Sr, had his gas station during that

time. We used to call it a "filling station", because people came to fill their cars with gas. He also had a little candy store next door. That's where I gained a lot of my sales knowledge because I learned to sell soft drinks and candy. And actually, that was my first job at age 13. I received \$2 weekly pay and about half was used to buy my lunch tickets at 16th Street and the rest was the allowance. So, I thought I had big money during that time. There were other businesses around on 14th Street. There was an ice cream parlor and there was a barbershop along there and Mrs. Wilson had a little store. Further down there were many Black owned businesses; there was a drycleaner. I think it was Better Way Cleaners. The Welch's had a woodyard that was up on 16th Street.

5th Avenue was like a real classy area for African Americans, and we had many professionals who lived on 5th Avenue. I recall Dr. Leggett, who was a dentist, Mr. Jordan, who owned property and Jordan Park School was named after that family. Doctor Ponder, who I think was the first African American doctor here. And I remember that Dr. Ponder, also rented rooms out to teachers who worked at the nearby junior high school. Charlie Williams was one of those persons and James Bolden. 5th Avenue was a real Class A street."

- **The Boston Brothers, David and Archie**

"I'm David Boston and I currently live in Cypress, California. I used to live in the area close to the gas plant area, and it was called Robinson Court. I don't remember the exact address, but it was Robinson Court between Ninth and 10th Avenue South.

I'm Archie Boston. I lived with David at 50 Robinson Court and Fourth Avenue South. When we moved into the area from Clewiston, I believe I may have been about four or five years old. And I just recall, a bunch of bungalow type houses, muddy streets, and also, we had various classes of people living in in the area of Robinson Court. If you lived on the front part of the

community, you had a view of the street, and the street was paved, and you also had a view of traffic. If you lived in the next section, it was not quite as high status and if you lived in the very back area, it was really the lower status in the community. However, we all had, you know, incredibly good rapport with all of the neighbors, but you could kind of tell the hierarchy, you know, because they would treat you a little bit differently than if you lived on what we call the front sidewalk. And the streets were very muddy when it would rain. Matter of fact, all of the homes were built at high elevation for when it would flood.

With a few other friends we would go to Booker Creek, maybe less than a half a mile from where we lived. Yeah, kind of down a hill. And Archie and I and some other friends would actually go, although we were told not to go, to the area because it was dangerous. So, with Archie and some other friends we'd go looking for alligators during the wet season. We would actually go through this very thick bushy area to the bank of Booker Creek, and we had a rope that we had suspended from a tree, and we would play Tarzan.

I was too afraid because I could not swim, said David. But I remember Archie would do it. They would actually drop down into the swift moving water. Yeah, but David, you forgot we were skinny dipping. Oh Yeah; there were no girls around. We used to go to the South Mole Beach and swim, but it was so far away, and our mother would not let us walk down there through the White section. You know, so we thought, well, if we can't swim there, we got to go somewhere. So, Booker Creek. We would sneak down there to swim and it was really fun. We were just swimming across the creek not up and down the creek. The thing is, now that we look back in hindsight, they were pouring oil and all kinds of waste in the creek. And we were swimming in that stuff. I don't know if we could have gotten cancer or anything. But it was so

dangerous now that we look at it in hindsight. And my feeling is God must have been with us because we were like, David wasn't, but I was very mischievous.

I remember walking around barefoot you know, all over the place. It was like maybe about a mile area, but we would wander around not worrying about people, you know, molesting us or doing anything. It was so carefree. And our education down there. You know, I had to write something about education in the schools we attended, and I told them, my school was excellent. Davis Elementary school was great. We had fantastic teachers. They instilled in us, you know, morality. Just all the things that our church taught us was also taught in the schools.”

- **Essie Gwendolyn Johnson Hills**

“I lived in the Gas Plant area at 1210 Jacobs Lane. I was born in Herndon, Georgia. stayed there only six weeks. My mom left came back here and I've lived here all my life. Living on Jacobs Lane was fun because we had kids around. And not only that, as in most Black neighborhoods with children, you normally had an adult who looked out for you. And we did. We called her Granny. Her name was Minnie. She was nosy. She stayed on top of things for the parents, and she was always old to us. We never knew her age. Back then 60 was old. And she was always that old granny, but Granny kept us in line, and Granny told our parents when we stepped out of line. Granny was married to Mr. Isaiah, and he was a character. He kept an alligator in a bathtub in the backyard. Oh, yes. All the kids knew the guidelines; you do not get to but a certain point to that bathtub and you don't touch anything. And we did not. It was in the bathtub with a wooden lid on it. And Gator was the length of the bathtub. We all went to bed one night, the next day Gator was gone. The story, we were not sure if it was true or not, but we were told that Gator was dinner for Mr. Isaiah. All we knew was that Gator was gone. Yes, living in

that area we were a family and that's what made the area of wonderful. We all got along. There were many children around and as I stated there was someone there always to look out for us.”

Yes, the memories are happy memories. Because the times were fun times. I can barely think of when we really were not happy. Yes. Getting together on Friday night. That was something we thoroughly enjoyed. We would all get together. They would cook the crabs, the neighbors, their children, we will all come together. We would have the crabs. We would have sodas, and music and dancing. We would all just be one big happy family. Oh, and that was so much fun.

Something that we looked forward to. That really brought us together as a family. It was in the open in the backyard behind the houses. Yes. It was out in the open. We would have to sweep the backyard in the day preparing for the night because they wanted everything to look nice. It was basically dirt that we were sweeping, no grass. We had to make it look nice and neat. But it was so much fun. Having everyone together and enjoying ourselves. It was just a fun time. To come together and enjoy each other, laughing, eating, dancing, sometimes the older people were drinking, but that was very much a part of our culture to be together, don't you think?”

- **Roslyn Graham**

“I was born in St. Petersburg, Florida. My address was 1421 and a half, Fourth Avenue South St. Petersburg, Florida.

I had a wonderful childhood. We had fun. We had so much fun because we had neighbors that had children that we played with. They took care of us. Our parents took care of their kids. We went from door to door, house to house. We played dodgeball, we played baseball. You know, We did, what was it skating on the sidewalk? bicycling. We had fun. Yeah, that's what it was like, and it was quiet. Yeah, we didn't have what you call gangs back then. You know, we

didn't have that. And we didn't have the fighting or whatever the kids are doing now. We did not have that because our parents paid more attention to us.

The neighborhood was safe, very safe. We used to play until late, like eight at night and we had the street lights, we had the lights, we had no problem. The parents were sitting on the porch watching us play as we would run up and down. And they always would say, "don't let me have to yell for you to come home. Don't get out of voice range".

When I was coming up, we had a lot of Black owned businesses. The Browns had a cleaner on the corner of Third Avenue between 14th and 15th Street. Mr. Moultrie had a shoe repair shop and the Burney's had their store on the corner right across from my church Bethel Metropolitan. And Mr. Floyd, I'm not sure if you remember him. He was down over there by McRae funeral home on Fifth Avenue. He had his corner store right there. We had a lot of Black owned businesses in that neighborhood. We didn't have to travel far for anything.

When they relocated us from the Gas Plant area, they misrepresented themselves and I felt betrayed. I felt hurt because they were taking my family's livelihood, my neighbor's livelihood, my home away from me where I grew up. And they gave me nothing in return. Okay, so we're looking toward going into a new venture, a new life where we can own our homes. You know, our parents will own something that's theirs. Instead of renting, most of those people rented. They did not own that property. We thought for the first time, what a lot of them did, for the first time they were going to own something that they could call theirs. I felt betrayed. I felt hurt. My parents had worked hard. My grandmother, my aunt had worked hard to live where we lived, and to keep it up. Decent people. And then the next thing you know, it was like they were being thrown to the streets, to the woods, nowhere to go but scramble around trying to find a place that was decent enough to raise their children again. That's how I felt. I felt like it was time

for us, or me, or someone to step forward and say, 'enough is enough.' You know, what else can you do to us? You just kicked us out. We have nowhere to go. So, what's next for us?"

The narratives highlighted numerous examples of a community that was family centered. It was hence doubly discouraging that residents' moves from the Gas Plant failed to afford economic opportunities as had been expected, though there were perceived health benefits of moving away from contaminated soil.

Education

The educational system in St. Petersburg was haunted for decades by the aftereffects of segregated practice. Despite federal laws to integrate schools and promote equal opportunities for students, Pinellas County long struggled to provide equitable educational experiences for Black students.

Segregated Education: 1910-1971

As has been well established, segregated school environments are typically plagued with inequities. In St. Petersburg and Pinellas County, tax support for Black schools was grossly inadequate. The Black school term was half the length of the White term, and Black teachers were paid much less than their White counterparts. These institutionalized injustices ensured that many to most local Black people in the city remained under-educated and impoverished, although most Whites regarded this as a natural and proper state of affairs (Arsenault, 2017).

Davis Academy and Jordan Park Elementary were the first two elementary schools built for Black students in St. Petersburg. Davis Academy, later to become Davis Elementary opened in 1910 at 944 Third Avenue South. Davis Academy was the first school built for African Americans in the city. In addition to offering reading, writing, and arithmetic, the school also

offered courses in domestic services and manual training. Davis Elementary closed in 1967 (Rooks, 2003). Jordan Park Elementary, named for Elder Jordan, Sr., opened in 1926 and closed in 1975. George W. Perkins served as principal with a staff of twenty-one teachers and 1100 students. The school had the first home economics classes for boys, a school chorus, PTA organization, free night school for adults, double sessions, and a reading clinic for Blacks (Rooks, 2003).

In 1927 Gibbs High School opened, which was named after Jonathan Clarkson Gibbs. Mr. Gibbs was a notable African American who served as a presbyterian minister and office holder during the Reconstruction era. Mr. Gibbs served as the first and only Black Secretary of State, and Superintendent of Public Instruction of Florida. Along with Mr. Josiah Thomas Walls who served as a U.S. Congressman from Florida, they were among the most powerful Black office holder in Florida during the Reconstruction era (Dinnella-Borrego, 2016).

Sixteenth Street School serving grades kindergarten through ninth grade opened in 1952. John Hopkins served as principal of the elementary school and Frederick Burney was principal of the junior high school. The school now bears the name of former principal John H. Hopkins (Rooks, 2003).

Even though federal laws ordered the desegregation of schools, segregated educational practices persisted in Pinellas County.

Desegregation of Public Schools in Pinellas County.

Despite federal mandate to desegregate schools, there was and continue to be a battle to provide non-White students with similar educational opportunities as their White counterparts. The Pinellas County School Board stubbornly followed the national trend, building new schools (that would later be abandoned) in the “ghetto” to avoid Black spillover into nearby White

schools (Wilson, 2009). This strategy was used for 15 years as an effective dodge to the Supreme Court's 1954 order. The strategy was defended by the myth of separate but equal. A system of pairing and clustering Black and White schools was used in the late 1960s to start desegregation in nine predominantly Black schools in St. Petersburg. In September 1971, the Pinellas County School Board voluntarily desegregated schools countywide by way of court-ordered busing. Pinellas is among the last counties in the state to desegregate its schools but is the first Florida school district to use busing to accomplish desegregation.

Ten years after the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision in 1954, Charles Rutledge and five other African American parents filed a federal lawsuit against the Pinellas School Board in what became known as *Leon W. Bradley Jr. et al. v. The Pinellas County School Board* (Bradley v. The Pinellas County School Board, 2000, 2011; Mckee, 2014). It was this court case that led to the desegregation of schools in Pinellas County. In 1969, the court ruled that the school system was successful in converting to a unitary system. The plaintiffs appealed, and the case continued on for decades. Indeed, this case still seeks to ensure equal rights and opportunity today. At stake in the 50-year lawsuit were a set of educational disparities that pertain to graduation rates, proficiency on state assessments, participation in accelerated classes, school discipline, eligibility criteria for special education programs, and increases in the diversity of staff. The case was sent to mediation in 2017 after the court ruled the system was not unitary and ordered the county to address it (Sibley Dolman Gipe, 2017 - <https://www.dolmanlaw.com/anti-segregation-lawsuit-pinellas-court-50-years-later/>). Although this was the third time the case was sent to mediation, this time it was different because one of the attorneys proposed combining the case with a newer 2000 case that likewise alleged that

Black students were being unfairly treated in the school. From these actions came a “Bridging the Gap” plan. According to Dolman Law,

It is not common for a case to drag on for so long. Perhaps it’s a sign of the community, state of racial affairs, or it’s just a complicated matter that has no easy answer. Through persistence and an unwavering need to see the school system treat non-White students more fairly, the plaintiffs have perhaps done something great for this school district, state, and nation. If a plan can be worked out that comes close to fixing the six issues presented, we will have made great strides toward a society built on the principles of liberty, equality, and justice for all. (Sibley Dolman Gipe, 2017)

Hence, even after laws to desegregate schools passed, Pinellas has struggled to afford equitable opportunities for Black students.

Matters came clearly into focus following a 2015 Pulitzer Prize-winning Tampa Bay Times five-part series dubbed "Failure Factories", highlighting inequities in public schools with predominantly Black and low-income families. The series highlighted the lack of support offered, and challenges students and teachers faced, which negatively impacted their professional identities. This series proved to be an important catalyst for change as it highlighted a longstanding failure to address structural disparities in education to promote justice and equitable opportunities for all (Ruth, July 15, 2016).

On July 8, 2016, the Tampa Bay Times reported that increased funding was given to the schools identified in the series, and that mental health and classroom aides were assigned to schools (Lash, July 8, 2016). Additionally, "transformation teams" were also assigned to schools to assist administrators with behavior management and hiring practices, and many school leaders were changed. The article suggested that these interventions contributed to 3 out of the 5 schools

improving their school grades. Thus, adequate funding and support appear to address educational disparities in predominantly Black school settings.

Healthcare

Historically, equitable healthcare access and quality have followed the same trends outlined above in other public sectors. Indeed, public hospital access, available elsewhere in Pinellas beginning in 1906, was not even available to the south St. Petersburg Black community until 1923. The following section describes historical developments and is followed by a summary of health care disparities (Arsenault, 2017, Wilson, 2009).

Segregated Health Care

Historically, public hospital access was not available to the south St. Petersburg Black community until 1923, when the racially segregated Mercy Hospital opened. In 1922, The City of St. Petersburg had purchased five acres of land on 22nd Street South to build the 3,500 square foot Mercy Hospital. The hospital opened in 1923, without a Black physician on staff. It was not until 1926 that Mercy Hospital had its first African American physician, Dr. James Maxie Ponder. Dr. Ponder remained the only Black physician on staff for more than ten years. In 1938, county health department director Dr. W. H. Pickett pointed out that 70% of the Black population and 30% of whites were in need of medical aid (St. Petersburg Times, September 2, 1938). He noted that officials had done a good job with beautification and attracting winter visitors, it had neglected health needs. Dr. Paul B. Cornely (an analyst for a Rockefeller foundation pointed out that, “it is a mistake to have health services for the negroes as such” (St. Petersburg Times, March 23, 1946, p. 11). St. Petersburg had about 3.2 beds per thousand for the white population, versus 1.8 beds per thousand for Blacks (St. Petersburg Times, March 23, 1946, p. 11). He described other disparities: “The 10-bed Jones home for aged negroes “is a

firetrap and absolutely unsatisfactory,” he asserted, explaining it had no flush toilets and no bathing facilities except wash tubs...White children kept at the American Legion Crippled hospital have a teacher at the facility, while Black children at Mercy Hospital had no such service, regardless of how long they are in the hospital” (St. Petersburg Times, March 23, 1946, p. 11).

By 1953, St. Petersburg had five Black physicians providing quality health care to the African American population in the city and surrounding area. Medical staff worked diligently to provide quality care even as they struggled with outdated equipment that had been discarded from Mound Park, no pharmacy, and no laboratory. When surgical procedures were unavoidable, they were performed by White doctors from Mound Park. The hospital was not air conditioned. Even under such adverse conditions in the fiscal year ending in October 1956 the hospital is reported to have performed 474 operations of which 273 were major surgeries and to have delivered more than 550 babies.

Unfortunately but not surprisingly given the inequities evident in all other sectors, Mercy Hospital endured significant financial struggles, owing to inadequate funding from outside sources, insufficient payments from patients, and inadequate health insurance. As a result, Black patient care could never stay on a par with White patient care in the city, and eventually tragedies struck, such as a baby being burned in an incubator in 1965 (St. Petersburg Times, August 19, 1965).

On April 13, 1966, the *St. Petersburg Times* reported, “Mercy Hospital, 1344 22nd Street South, for many years the municipal hospital for Negro patients, is dead. It was 43. The cause of death was listed as an overdose of red ink. The patients and staff of Mercy have been transferred

to Mound Park Hospital. Only eight patients were involved in the final transfer last Friday” (St. Petersburg Times, April 13, 1966, 1B)

At the Whites-only Mound Park Hospital (now Bayfront Medical Center), Dr. Fred Alsup admitted the first Black patient, Mrs. Altamease Chapman, in 1961 (St. Petersburg Times, February 27, 1961, p.1B). In 1964, though not fully desegregated, an uptick was seen in Black patients admitted to Mound Park Hospital. It was only after the 1966 closing of Mercy Hospital (St. Petersburg Times, April 13, 1966, 1B), the Black hospital, that all patients were admitted to Mound Park, leading to it becoming effectively desegregated. Though Mercy Hospital reopened for a time, it had to close yet again in 1986 because of asbestos, leading to the hospital being boarded up and abandoned. Though an era had ended, on February 2, 2004, the first patient walked through the doors of the new Johnnie Ruth Clark Health Center at the Historic Mercy Hospital (Reese, 2018).

The provision of care by Black providers in the community came into focus once again more recently following a pause by City Council in its April 15th and May 13th, 2021, meetings to re-examine approved CRA funding for the Next STEPP Center. The pause was triggered by a set of spurious public assertions made at a Council meeting by six primarily White organizations. The Next STEPP Center is a venerable operation fully supported by the African American community in St. Petersburg for more than twenty years, and hence the allegations brought were jarring and disturbing. The surprise attacks and their short-term impact harkened stark reminders of the historical privileging of White voices at City Council deliberations, often at the expense of Black sensibilities. Unlike many prior Black-White confrontations that came before City Council over the years, however, in the most recent 2021 incident the Council revisited its funding

determination involving Next STEPP and ultimately voted unanimously to move forward with funding (Manning, 2021).

Health Disparities

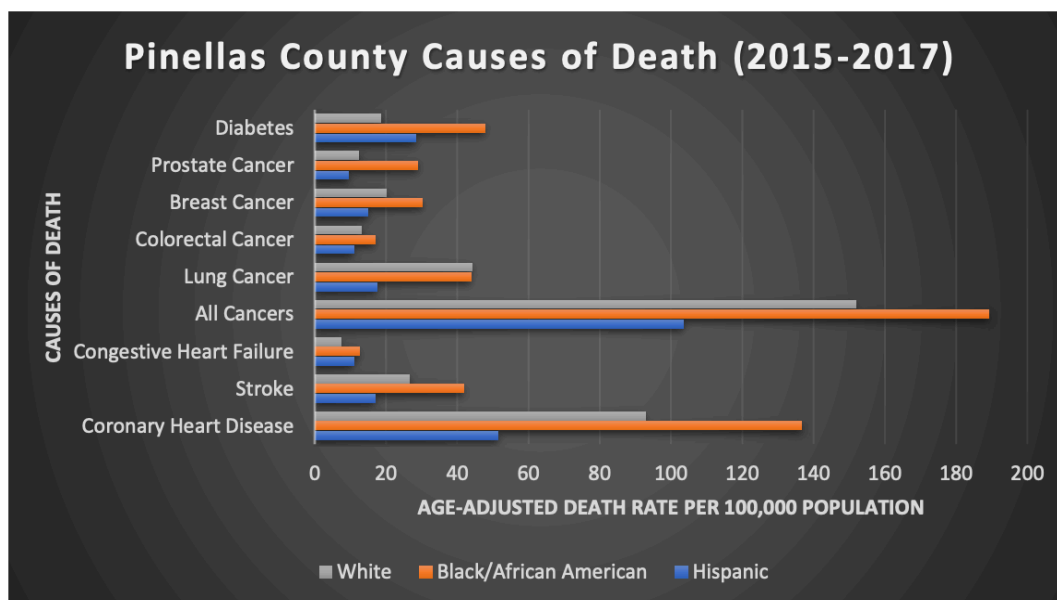
In St. Petersburg, as in Black communities throughout the nation, health disparities are well-documented and substantial. Though focus is often on adult disparities and life longevity, racial disparities in health start from birth, and exert impact throughout an individuals' lifespan (Assari, 2008b; Braveman et al., 2011). For example, in Pinellas, where the infant mortality rate (6.8 per 1,000 live births) is higher than the state rate (6.1), the rate at which Black infants die during their first year of life (12.9) is more than double that for White infants (5.3) (Florida Health Pinellas County, 2018). This disparity has remained consistent over the past decade, with only occasional one-year gap-narrowing standing as aberrations - for they are followed by a next-year rebound to the higher disparity rate (Florida Health Pinellas County, 2012; 2020).

Black residents also have a higher mortality rate than any other racial group for nearly all the top causes of death. According to data compiled the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg (2018), "except for lung cancer, the Black or African American rates exceed the rates of both Whites and Hispanics for all leading causes of death" (p. 14). Figure 8 illustrates Pinellas County causes of death between 2015-2017 (Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, 2018, p. 15). As discussed earlier in this report, health disparities are well documented for both Black men and women, and racialized economic segregation is strongly associated with access to affordable and quality healthcare. Among Black men, COPD, HIV, colorectal and prostate cancer, and other life-ending health conditions remain higher than they are among White men. Racialized economic segregation is one reason why, as Black men often get care too late. Published studies examining Black-White disparities reveal that Black men are more likely than White men to

receive, for example, late-stage diagnoses of life-ending conditions such as colorectal cancer (R. Williams et al., 2016; Scally et al., 2018).

Figure 8

Pinellas County Causes of Death (2015-2017)

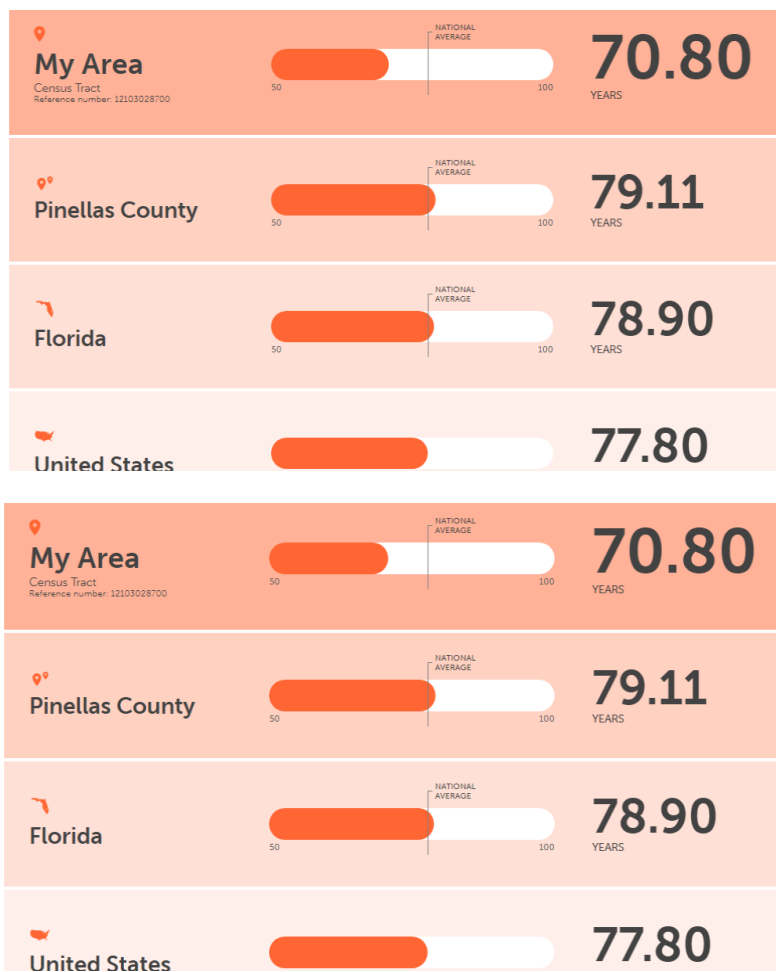


Note. From “Health Equity: An Initial Health Equity Brief for Pinellas County, Florida,” by Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, 2018, p. 15. (<https://healthystpete.foundation/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/FHSP-Health-Equity-Report-2018.pdf>). In the public domain.

Tragically but perhaps not surprisingly, analyses of life expectancy data indicate that residents of certain census tracts in St. Petersburg live shorter lives, owing in part to where it is they live. According to analyses from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (2021), significant gaps in life expectancy persist across Pinellas County cities and towns, ZIP codes and neighborhoods. As one example, the average life expectancy of St. Petersburg citizens living on the Deuces (“My Area” in the chart below) is over 8 years less than those elsewhere in Pinellas County (Figure 9).

Figure 9

Life Expectancy: Could Where You Live Influence How Long You Live?



Note. From “Life Expectancy: Could Where You Live Influence How Long You Live?” by Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, n.d. (<https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/interactives/whereliveaffectshowlongyoulive.html>). In the public domain.

Disparities in life expectancy are even more pronounced for specific comparisons that compare longevity in redlined and greenlined areas. For example, the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg reported that average life expectancy of residents living in neighborhoods surrounding Campbell Park in South St. Petersburg was 66.5 years, whereas the average life expectancy of residents living in Vinoy Park and Snell Isle was 82 years.

These findings underscore the urgent need to mitigate structural racism and level the playing field for Black parents living in St. Petersburg. Because lifelong stress response systems in the human brain and body are shaped principally during pregnancy and from birth to age three and are influenced and shaped by everyday interactions and experiences, a focus on the early years is crucial. Increasing support and reducing race-related stress and adversity impacting the fathers, mothers, relative caregivers, daycare providers and other adults who engage with and help shape children's early brain development can have lifelong impacts on Black children's developing stress response systems, resiliency, and health.

Unfortunately, Blacks are less likely to access mental health supports and services (Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg, 2018), including receiving such supports during the COVID-19 pandemic. As has been well documented, Black residents suffered a disproportionate number of confirmed COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the county (Manning, 2020). Already problematic before the pandemic, issues with equitable access to and receipt of necessary health and mental health supports have not improved during the COVID crisis.

Finally, disparities also exist in health insurance coverage. The State of the Region- 2020 Regional Equity Report (Tampa Bay Partnership Foundation, 2020) noted that 84.8% of White people in Pinellas had insurance compared to 81.3% of Black people (Tampa Bay Partnership Foundation, 2020). This disparity matters because "Individuals with health insurance have better and more affordable access to health care than those who are uninsured. As such, they are more likely to seek preventative care and necessary medical treatment, which leads to better health outcomes" (Tampa Bay Partnership Foundation, 2020, p. 66). For these and other reasons cited throughout this report, health disparities remain a primary area of ongoing concern for St. Petersburg's Black residents.

Summary of Interviews and Town Hall Conversations

Echoing the quantitative data presented above, themes from the interviews and town hall conversation highlighted resident perceptions of injustices in the criminal-legal system, in housing and property values, in lack of business opportunities, health, and in the quality of education offered. Most residents interviewed understood that disparities exist, though different interviewees expressed diverse opinions regarding how such disparities affect members of the community.

The following excerpts capture resident perceptions of how structural racism in St. Petersburg negatively impacts the Black community. Resident 1 noted, “So structural racism is a euphemism for... bondage”, and continued, “it's accomplished through policy. And sometimes the policy looks like it's designed to benefit individuals, when it's really designed to keep people bound, rather than to empower, to inspire, and to support.”

Resident 5 noted, it “is people being born into a society that is unbalanced, and is unbalanced . on the axis [of] skin color. and when you look historically, no denying that this was embedded in the laws”.

Resident 6 also suggested that it is the “absence of the availability of resources... When we consider the disparity in the way in which our city is maintained...in different areas of our city, from roadways to lighting. To cleanliness. To sidewalks, I mean, just name it. It's just so obvious.” The residents suggested that the infrastructure in place does not support all individuals and communities equitably and stagnate opportunities for growth.

Resident 8 acknowledged that “there's a lot of discrimination against low end [income]...so many of those people are African American. It's kind of blurred with race. And I think there's definitely a bad outcome for a lot of people in this neighborhood”. Resident 8’s

remark highlighted that the intersectionality of poverty and race is often where discriminatory practices are most evident. Even when Black men and women manage to extricate themselves and advance from “sticky floors”, glass ceilings frequently limit their advancement.

For example, Resident 4 noted, “I don't see progress, I see aggression. I don't see opportunity. I see if you make it out...children are ... impacted by all of the pains of poverty”. Resident 4's remark underscores how the impact of discriminatory practices impacts not only the individual but also future generations.

Criminal-Legal System

Interviewed residents confirmed their own lived experiences of there being heavy police presence in their neighborhoods and communities. During the town hall the beta group acknowledged that there is a high frequency of police stops for Blacks. A similar sentiment was echoed by Resident 3 who noted, “I would more or less say it's centered around my community, there is heavy police activity within my community it is under the guise of it being a high crime area. But yeah, I will say that heavy police activity [is] in my neighborhood or my streets, things of that nature”. To address excessive police presence, both the beta and delta groups in the town hall meeting identified a need for accountability in policing.

Residents also acknowledged strained relationships between the police and Black residents date back decades. For instant resident 8 noted,

There's just no effective policing in a neighborhood like this. This, this goes back to the 80s when it was shooting all the time. A lot of homicides, a lot of being intimidated.

Nobody would report anything to police. And people would call it a warzone. And police were just not effective. They were arresting people. They were not arresting people from drive by shootings...witnesses were afraid to come forward. And in this case an innocent

person spent more than half his life in prison... It's prisons. Yeah, I think it is structural racism. Maybe people in charge don't see the humanity of these defendants because they look different. But somehow, they look through the cracks and they don't get a fair trial. ... I think we need more community police immediately to try to stop this violence. I think the violence is it's just, it's impressing the neighborhood.

This quote echoes concerns of many residents that innocent people continue to be arrested and jailed. Another major fear expressed is that of testifying as a witness to a crime. Interviews highlighted a need for community policing, in which relationships are fostered with members of the community to build trust and help reduce the crime rate. In the epsilon group, a participant noted that not all Black men interact with the criminal-legal system and that many have excelled in the community. Unfortunately, there is a stereotype that a Black male is often associated with criminal behavior and activities. Hence, Resident 7 noted “you had to have this talk with your son” about how to interact with police officers. Representatives from the alpha, gamma and epsilon groups believed that there remains a need for reparation. Representatives from the beta group suggested that there is also a need to increase the number of Blacks judges, and the representation of Blacks in other leadership roles in the criminal legal system who can advocate and help to address disparities.

Economics

Residents also acknowledged that Blacks experience barriers to advancing economically. They recognized the benefits of being connected and noted that the content on individual curriculum vitae (resume) was seldom sufficient to obtain competitive advantages. For instance, Resident 2 noted,

That's another structure that's not intentional, but it's still a barrier when you start to create relationships, because I know that you get a job or anything else, start with who you know. And if they don't know you, then you got to start focus everything on a resume. If they do know you, then it's a whole different kind of conversation and networking. I think that's also part of the racial structure, racial and structural racism is... the networking they do.... everybody's done a golf tournament fundraiser, everybody. Well, a lot of Americans and minority, they don't play golf. You know, ... if you're a nonprofit and African focus, then you will have a basketball tournament, that may be a fundraiser, not a golf tournament. So just those things as a nonprofit. And you're saying, Well, how, who use the Chamber of Commerce, how many of us are in Chamber of Commerce ... and then it's the churches, and then it's the networking, all of those...have a role to play when it comes to institutional racism...barriers.

Resident 2's sentiment highlighted that Blacks are further disadvantaged by their preferred activities when engaging in fundraising efforts. Thus, a lack of access to influential people to network with can hinder economic opportunities.

There were also concerns relative to the accessibility of available resources. For instance, Resident 3 noted,

City manages the resources that are allocated to South St Petersburg because they will allocate certain funds for different projects like CRA and things of that nature, but the stipulations and requirements for those programs do not actually meet the needs of the community, so they'll have those resources in place, but the people that live in those areas don't even meet the qualification so therefore it allows outside people to come in and take

hold of those resources, and it never benefits or represents a change within the community.

Thus, residents emphasized that it is not sufficient to simply provide resources; rather, it is important that the resources are accessible to all residents, particularly those that are marginalized and significantly disadvantaged.

Housing and Property Value. Residents raised concerns relative to gentrification in the community. They also acknowledged that the City Council needs to revisit policies relative to housing to better support family structures. For instance, Resident 3 noted,

Housing is the biggest issue within the city right now because we, the city pretty much has underseas for gentrification, and I understand ... the economic impact and benefit to the city, but it puts the majority of the people in South St Petersburg African American community. First ... huge disadvantage. And so because of that, there aren't really a viable or good places to live. The community on the south side ..appears as if the African American community is kept, and limited to one area, and there is a bias going on or a prejudice going on within the community as it relates to affordable housing, and again back to the requirements so the requirements in and of itself, they limit or exclude potentially exclude the majority of South St Petersburg and African American residents but based on requirements so it keeps you clumps into an area I'm in, in order to maintain affordability, if that makes sense.

Resident 3's remark highlighted that gentrification is disproportionately and adversely impacting Black residents of St. Petersburg. Concerns were expressed that requirements for affordable housing generally excluded most Blacks. There were also concerns expressed relative to the

negative implications policies can have in affecting family units. For instance, Resident 1 indicated,

Housing, for example, that hack creates a policy where it doesn't support the family. It doesn't support the family structure of a father and a mother and children inside, you have to almost be destitute, single broken in order to qualify for something that would support a family... Children are not allowed to work who desire to work, because their parents will say, if you work that will count as household income. And that will make us ineligible to live here.

This quote highlighted the irony that when individuals seek to have two-parent homes, better themselves and find meaningful work, they can find themselves penalized by the system. .

Residents also made note that property purchased in Black communities was often devalued when appraised. For instance, Resident 8 noted,

This town redevelopment ... I think when they published that map and gave it to everybody, it caused a lot of people to stop investing in their homes. It's like it created blight... Because one absentee owner told me he bought property for the value of the empty lot and these lots lost value

This remark highlighted that individuals may not be inclined to invest in homes located in Black community because it can be devalued.

During the town hall, individuals acknowledged a need for the city to do more in supporting housing opportunities for Black residences. For instance, the epsilon group acknowledged a need to build more affordable housing. While in the gamma group, it was suggested that CRA funding be allocated to help low income and minority groups acquire land that can be used to build homes.

Lack of Business Opportunities. There were concerns relative to lack of economic development to advance the Black community. Even when considering the artistic identity of St. Petersburg, the city has done little to invest in African American art and amplify Black contributions to the city. Resident 3 noted,

There is very little economic development... that is more structural, because it does impact the community as a whole. And so it limits the opportunities that people have in relationship to earning ...[and] resources...the economic impact from structural racism is highly visible within South St Petersburg.

Resident 3 continued and acknowledged that due to stigmatism and stereotypes individuals are not inclined to establish businesses in Black communities. Resident 3 stated,

I think it has to do a lot of the times, with the perception of the people within the community so that people are definitely stereotype to the point to where businesses don't want to come and present those opportunities in addition to just regulations that the city enforces that makes it sometimes difficult not only for larger companies to come in and develop but for smaller businesses to even set up and begin to revitalize the community.

The residents also acknowledged that even though there are noticeable efforts to revitalize downtown, and increase the presence of small businesses, there is a lack of Black business owners. For instance, Resident 4 indicated,

The pier has been rebuilt. Downtown has been revitalized. All these small business owners, even manufacturing, has crept into South Saint Pete where the Job court is, or at 5th Ave and a lot of those warehouse buildings. I don't know one single Black business that owns a warehouse or owns a business in all these areas that have sprung up.

It was suggested that the city repeatedly failed to support African American business ventures. Resident 6 observed,

The gas plant area ...It was promised again. Job opportunities. And again, that's fallen flat outside of seasonal work for primarily those in the immediate community. It did not lead to full time steady employment...The demise of several communities ...Work force opportunities. And in large part, they've fallen flat time and time and time again... Even the land in which the new museum is to be built... A lot of land banking occurred with hopes that industry would be brought to the area creating employment opportunities.

Specifically for African Americans and those within the community. That did not happen.

Resident 6 highlighted that development that occurs within the community generally does not benefit African American residents. Thus, as the city seeks to support businesses, careful consideration should be given whether diverse racial groups are being afforded opportunities. During the town hall, the delta group suggested that policies need to be created and contractors are needed to monitor the opportunities afforded to Black owned businesses.

Health

During the interviews and the town hall conversations, there were concerns about the health care, and particularly the mental health care, that Black residents and returning veterans received. For instance, Resident 5 said, “we're trying to get those folks help for their mental health when it comes to our Black brothers and sisters struggle [with] all of the narratives of White supremacy”. Similarly, Resident 2 stated,

Think, not having enough mental health resources in an afro American community, you always got to go outside, if you want to, if you want to have mental health... you know, there are very, very, very few African American mental health providers via from the

psychology side, psychologists, psychiatrists, counselors started out, so a lot of the counselors that are out there don't look like you. And that's very important for them to have perspective because you have to have that.

Similarly, the alpha group from the town hall meeting advocated that there is a need to increase the mental health coverage for families and returning veterans.

The quality of health care and related cost was also discussed as a negative factor influencing individuals' quality of life. For instance, Resident 6 indicated that "we find ourselves on the short end of good health care over and over again." The beta group during the town hall also indicated that the cost of prescriptions prevents individuals from obtaining the medications needed to regulate and treat their medical conditions. Hence, the group recommended that health policies need to be revisited and altered to make health care more affordable and accessible.

Education

The residents acknowledged that disparities exist in the education of Black students when compared to their White counterparts, stemming from segregated school environments. For instance, Resident 8 noted, "education just needs better funding. One of the problems we had was... segregated school system". Unfortunately, it goes beyond allocating funding but also shifting culture. According to Resident 6, the education system for Blacks is viewed as "a pipeline to prison". This sentiment was echoed by Resident 1 who stated, "when they talk about the public school to prison pipeline, and all of those things, are all interconnected." These remarks suggest that many residents believe the public education system for Black students can be a catalyst to some students' criminalization.

The labels schools placed on Black students can limit opportunities and have negative implications on student identities. Residents expressed concerns that Black students'

Individualized Education Plans would, over time, denote an entrenched learning disability or behavioral disorder, which themselves may reflect misdiagnoses. For instance, Resident 1 stated,

When I look at their ...Individualized Education Plan, they like to label our children and they will mislabel them. Because of the reading scores, they'll equate that with a learning disability. And then from there, you can see that a child starts out in the narrative that they're very bright. And by the time they're in 10th grade they're now behavior problems. Now they're medicated and... it grieves me. Um, to see that and then you'll have some people will say, well, they just want a crazy check. The parents will want a crazy check for the disability. So that is heartbreaking. So the misdiagnosis of our children.

This quotation highlighted concerns about labeling but also raised concerns about negative expectations of certain parents. By contrast, other interviewees lauded parents' tenacity in the face of adversity. For instance, Resident 4 stated, "They [Black children] fared well academically, not because of the school system, but because of their parents." Resident 4 continued,

It is just roadblocks. So, it's not that my sons or my stepson have gotten an education because of the quality of Pinellas County schools. It's either because of their own initiative or parent driven. But, it's not because someone at the school said, you know what this this child has potential.

Hence, the involvement of parents in the child life is essential to the students having a quality education.

Concerns were also raised about access to resources and quality of teachers provided to students in predominantly Black schools in the transformation zone. For instance, Resident 4

noted, there is a “lack of education resources that are available to the Black”. While, Resident 1 stated,

I'm wanting to know how many teachers are in our transformation zone schools that have advanced degrees, because they keep blaming it on poverty... the parents and... attendance and all those things. And those are factors as well. But also include in your narrative that you don't give us teachers with advanced degrees or experience, years of experience, or, or that we're getting subs, our children are getting substitute teachers or no teacher at all. You know, so it's a lot.

During the town hall, the beta group recommended that the City Council take up conversations with the school board to help insure implementation of equitable policies and procedures for St. Petersburg schoolchildren. The gamma group focused on the sheer number of Black students not reading at grade level and proposed some solutions. The epsilon group believed that the City Council should become familiar with school disciplinary records and how rules are applied, to help intervene as they can within their purview to help disrupt the school to prison pipeline.

Results of Quantitative Data Analysis

Moving beyond qualitative data, this section reviews new statistical analysis completed for this study that examined currently available data to identify significant differences between Black and White residents of St Petersburg. The new set of analyses reported below examined select data in the criminal-legal and economic sectors. Data sources, analyses, and interpretations of these analyses follow.

Criminal-Legal Research from the Clerks of Court Data

Data obtained from the Clerk of Court of the 6th Judicial Circuit were utilized to evaluate how residents in St Petersburg experience law enforcement and the court system, as a function of their race/ethnicity. A small set of offenses that include a degree of law enforcement discretion were examined for disparities based on race/ethnicity. Offenses analyzed represent areas of race/ethnicity disproportionality that might benefit from further investigation. All offenses data and data analyses followed the same methodology as Measures for Justice (2021).

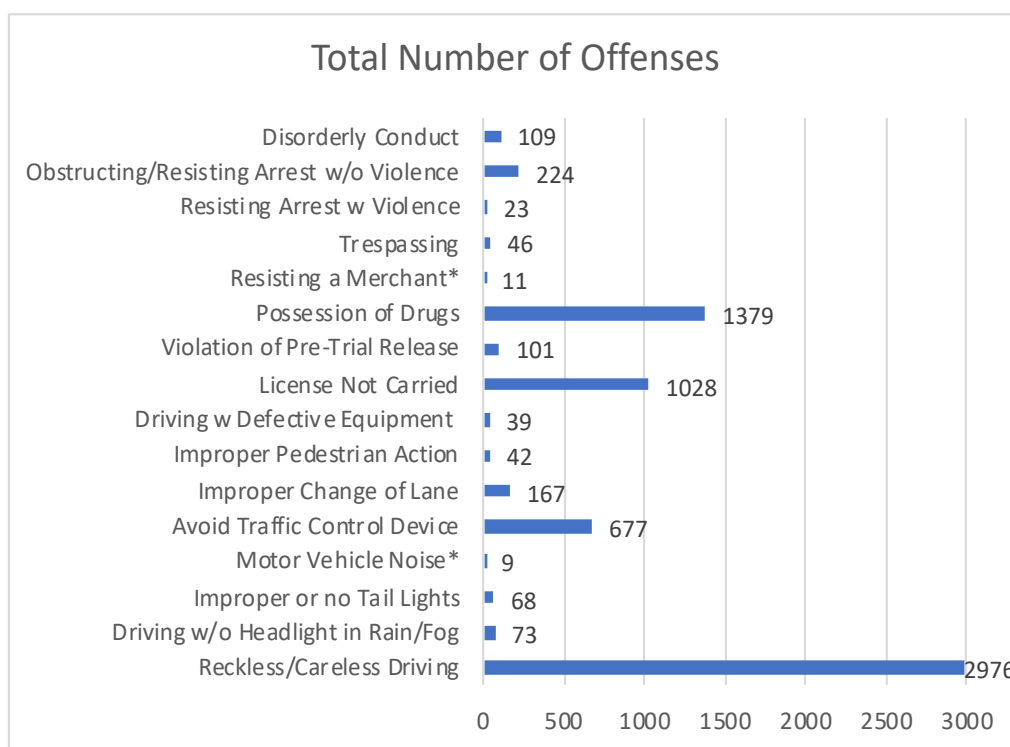
- Reckless/Careless Driving – 316.192
- Criminal Mischief – 806.13
- Disorderly Conduct – 877.03
- Driving w Defective Equipment – 316.215 1
- Driving w/o Headlight in Rain/Fog – 316.217
- Improper Change of Lane – 316.085 2
- Improper Pedestrian Action – 316.130 1
- Improper or no Taillights – 316.221
- License Not Carried – 322.15 1
- Motor Vehicle Noise – 316.293
- Avoid Traffic Control Device – 316.074 1
- Obstructing/Resisting Arrest w/o Violence – 843.02
- Resisting Arrest w Violence – 843.01
- Possession of Drugs – 499.03 and 893.13
- Resisting a Merchant – 812.015 (6)
- Trespassing – 810.08

- Violation of Pre-Trial Release – 741.29 (6)

The database utilized captured the past eight years (2013-2021). It did not identify cases by judge, so unfortunately it was not possible to determine differential sentencing specific to cases in St Petersburg. Data from Measures for Justice reveal that race-related judicial bias does exist in the 6th Circuit Court. For example, data for 2020 and the first three months of 2021 show a significant difference between people who are Black and those who are White when restricted to defendants with a residential address in St Petersburg. First, the total number of cases for each offense type is shown in Figure 10. Offenses with an asterisk had a low number of absolute cases (less than 15 in total).

Figure 10

Offenses

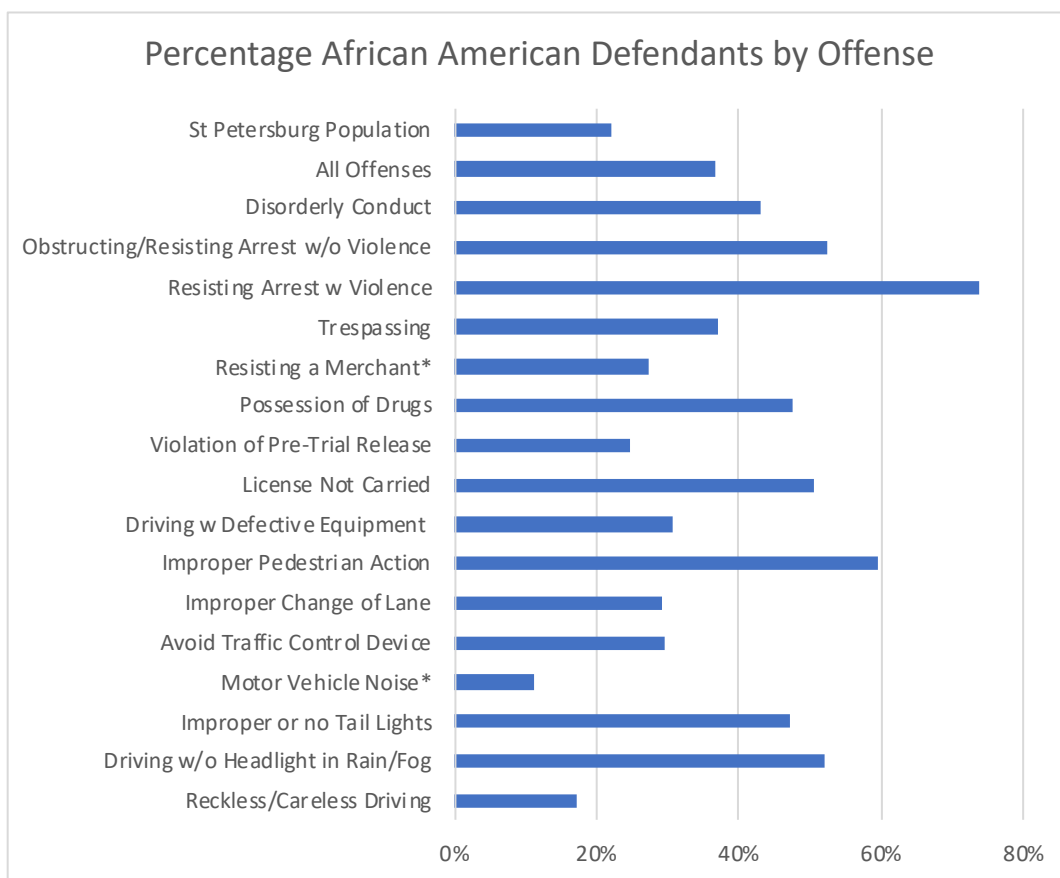


Of the 15 selected offenses, most common were Reckless/Careless Driving, followed by Possession of Drugs, and Failure to Carry a License.

Next, the graph below shows the percentage of African American defendants whose address is listed as St Petersburg, by offense, as well as the percentage of African Americans in St Petersburg (Figure 11).

Figure 11

Offenses for African American Defendants by Offense



Considering these data together, results indicate that except for Reckless/Careless Driving and Motor Vehicle Noise, the percentage of defendants who are Black for each offense exceeds the percentage of the population that is Black in St Petersburg. In fact, more than half of

the people arrested for Resisting Arrest with Violence, Improper Pedestrian Action, Obstructing/Resisting Arrest without Violence, and License Not Carried, were Black. Though it is not possible to estimate from the current data, additional studies may find value in determining whether and how these data and rates of disproportionality have changed over time.

Observations. The following observations were made based on the data on offenses:

- Racial disparities: The data indicates that for both St Petersburg and Pinellas County, there are racial disparities. These exist in law enforcement and in the judicial system (Clerk of Courts Data, Measures for Justice, Bias on the Bench)
- Disparity data: The collection and analysis of race-specific data by jurisdiction is essential and should be a routine practice. Such data will reveal areas that can be reviewed in greater detail and allow for remediation. These data and analysis can and should be routinely made public.

Related Resources. The following are a list of resources relates to racial profiling in the criminal justice system:

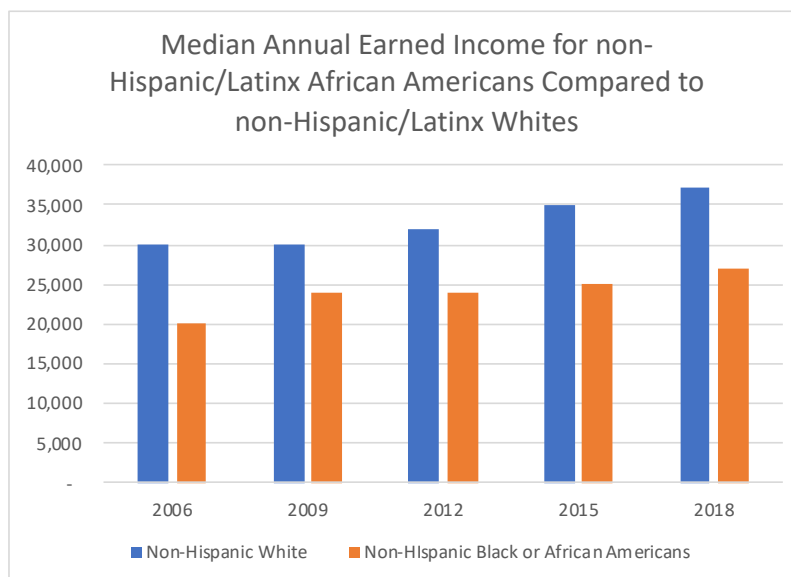
- [How Police Abuse the Charge of Resisting Arrest \(Cacho, 2020\)](#)
- [Florida May Be About to Launch the Most Ambitious Criminal Justice Transparency Project in the U.S. \(Ciaramella, 2018\)](#)
- [Can Big Data Fix Florida's Criminal Justice System \(Parker, 2019\)](#)
- [Tampa Bay Says It Doesn't Racial Profile, But Has No Data \(Surana, 2021\)](#)
- [More States Consider Automatic Criminal Records Expungement \(Hernández, 2021\)](#)
- [Oregon Supreme Court Bans Police Officers from Asking Random Questions During Traffic Stops \(Ellis, 2019\)](#)

- [Police Speak Less Respectfully to Black Drivers, Study Suggests](#) (Camp et al., 2021; Kaur, 2021)
- [How Race Impacts Who Is Detained Pretrial](#) (Sawyer, 2019)
- [Progressive DAs Are Shaking Up the Criminal Justice System. Pro-Police Groups Aren't Happy](#) (Smith, 2019)
- [Bias on the Bench](#) (Salman et al., 2016)

Economic Indicators

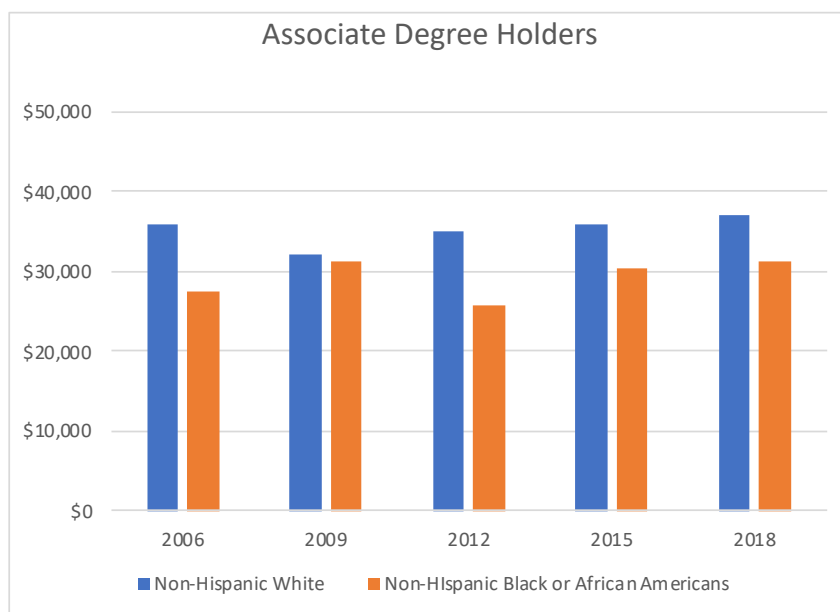
The second new set of analyses examining economic data shows multiple layers of racial disparity including earned income, earned income including educational attainment and home ownership, a reliable indicator of overall net worth and access to capital. A fundamental indicator of economic wellbeing is annual earned income. The Integrated Public Use Microdata Series (IPUMS) is the standard data resource for economic data such as income. The correlation between income and education was calculated. To avoid outliers influencing the calculations, the calculation is for median income, and only for groups that had at least 20 members.

In 2006, the median annual earned income of people who identify as non-Hispanic Black in Pinellas County was 67% of that of those who identify as non-Hispanic White (Figure 12). By 2018, that ratio was 73% (Figure 12).

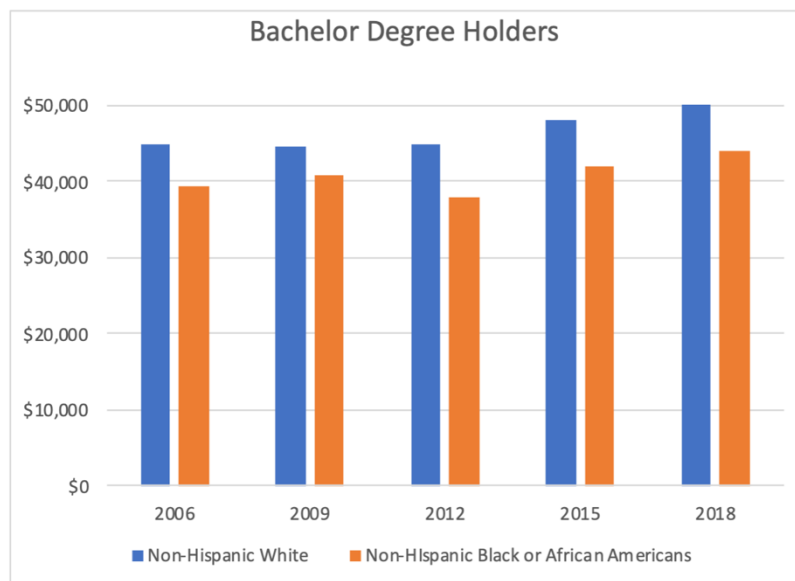
Figure 12*Earned Income from 2006–2018*

Furthermore, this disparity is not explained away by differences in the level of educational attainment. As the figures below show, the differences persist even if education levels are normalized. Moreover, recent IPUMS data also show the field in which the degree was obtained and, in every instance the racial disparity persisted regardless of field or level of attainment.

In 2006, the median annual earned income of residents who identified as non-Hispanic Blacks with an associate degree or equivalent in Pinellas was 77% of that of the residents who identify as non-Hispanic White (Figure 13). In 2018, that number had changed to 85% (Figure 13).

Figure 13*Associate Degree Holders*

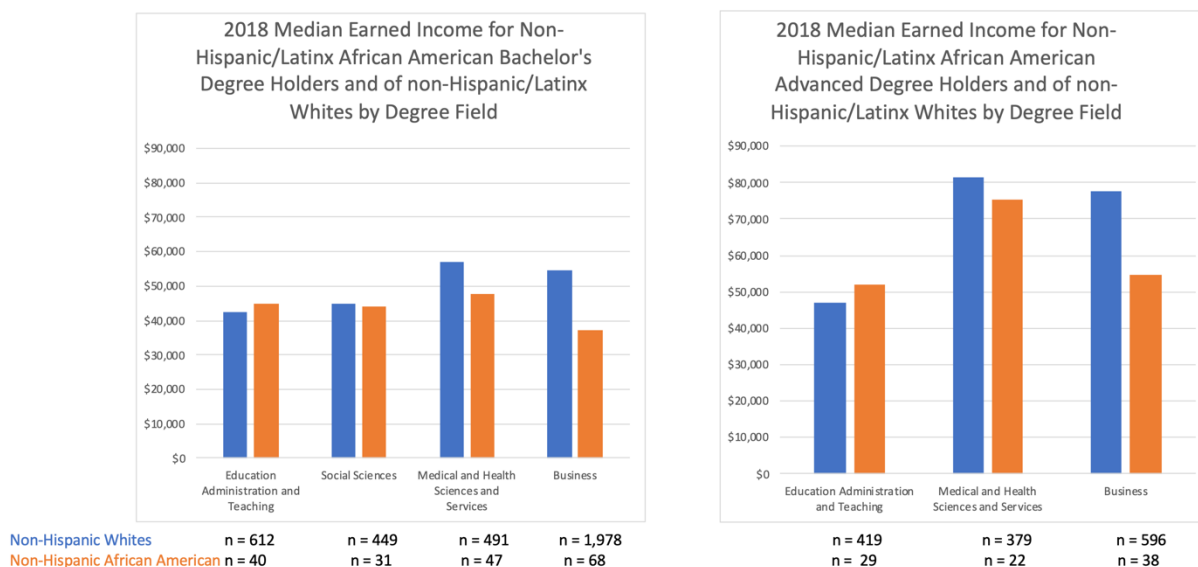
In 2006, the median annual earned income of residents who identified as non-Hispanic Black with a bachelor's degree in Pinellas was 88% of the median earned income of those identifying as non-Hispanic White. In 2018, those number had not changed. Moreover, the 2018 data show that the difference persists by degree field, except for the median earned income for those with a degree in educational administration or teaching. For example, the median annual earned income for non-Hispanic Black residents with a bachelor's degree in business, the field in which there are the most bachelor's degree holders, was 72% of the median income of residents who are non-Hispanic White (Figure 14).

Figure 14*Bachelor's Degree Holders*

The restrictions to groups with at least 20 members meant that it was impossible to calculate median earned incomes for non-Hispanic Blacks with master's degrees or advanced degrees for 2006. However, the 2018 data show that the median annual earned income of non-Hispanic Black residents with a master's degree is 82% of that of non-Hispanic White residents. Moreover, the difference persists when one considers "all advanced degrees," where the ratio is 79% (Figure 15). Also, as with bachelor's degree, the difference persists when one examines most degree fields. The only field in which median annual earned income for non-Hispanic Blacks exceeds that of non-Hispanic Whites is educational administration and teaching. For example, non-Hispanic Black residents with an advanced degree in business, again the field with the largest number of advanced degree holders, is only 71% of that for non-Hispanic White residents (Figure 15).

Figure 15

Median Income Comparison of African American and White Residents with Bachelor's Degree and Advanced Degrees



Observations. The following observations are made based on the data on the racial wage gap.

- **Racial wage gap:** There is a sizable racial wage gap in St Petersburg. In an equitable economy, all workers would earn a living wage, without systematic differences by race and gender. Low wages and pay gaps by race and gender undermine workers and their communities, while reducing local spending and tax revenue. Ensuring pay equity and rising wages for low-wage workers will boost incomes, resulting in more of the consumer spending that supports business growth and job creation.
- **Race/education wage gap persists:** Wages increase with higher educational attainment, but People of Color have lower median hourly wages at nearly every

education level compared with their White counterparts. White workers with only a high school diploma earn more than workers of Color with some college or an associate degree.

Resources. The following is a list of resources related to the racial wage gap.

- Five Ways to Expand Equitable Economic Development in Your City (Coffin & Belser, 2020)
- Five Principles of Community-Driven Development and How to Actualize Them (McKinney, 2021)
- Why Credit Scores Are Racist (Common Future, 2021)
- The Financial Justice Project Homepage (Financial Justice Project, n.d.).

Property Data

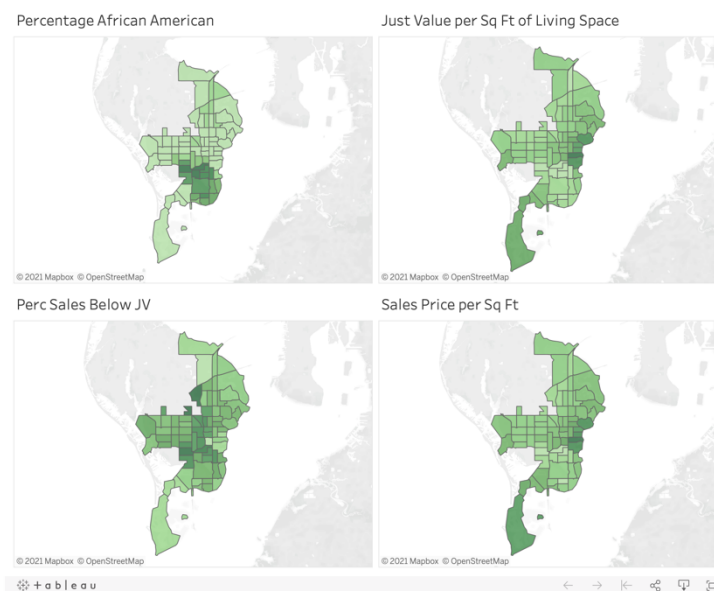
Home ownership is one of the most reliable methods to create intergenerational wealth (Blanden & Machin, 2017; Herring & Henderson, 2016; Kushi, 2020; Rugh, 2020). Wealth, or net worth, is essential to families in times of economic crisis or to take advantage of economic opportunity. The Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis estimates that more than 40% of US families cannot secure \$400 if they need to fend off a crisis such as health, transportation, or other unexpected expenses (Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, 2019). Additionally, there is a direct relationship between family wealth and child academic attainment. Nationally, the wealth gap between families who are Black and those who are White is estimated to be 7.8 times – net worth of \$188,200 vs \$24,100 (Bhutta et al., 2020). Our study’s analysis is based on data from the census (American Community Survey 2019 5-Year Estimates) about the ethnic and racial composition of the census tracts in St Petersburg combined with data from the Florida

Department of Revenue on the property tax roll in Pinellas and on the property sales. This initial analysis is confined to residential properties.

The following images show preliminary results of this analysis. The darker the hue the higher the value. It was important to explore whether there is a relationship between the racial composition of a census tract, the value per square foot of residential properties as assessed by the property tax appraiser (also known as “just value”), the value per square foot of residential properties as determined by actual sales price, and the percentage of properties that were sold at an actual sales price that was below its “just value.” Simple transfers of property deeds, which are recorded in the property sales data based as sales with a sales price of \$0, were ruled out. The image below shows the results. The image (Figure 16) is also available from Reichgelt (2021a). Scrolling over the census tracts on the web will show the actual values for each census tract.

Figure 16

Property Values for Each Census Tract

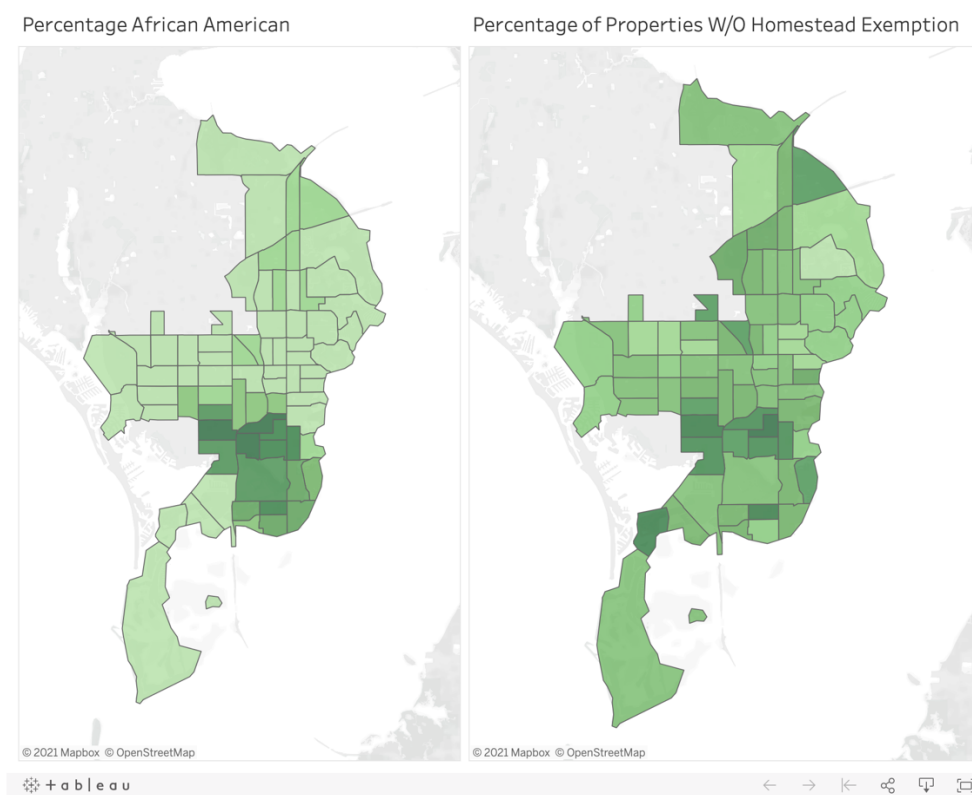


Note. From “Assessed Value and Sales Data,” by H. Reichgelt, (2021a), Public Tableau. ([https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/han.reichgelt/viz/AssessedValueandSalesData/Dashboard 1](https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/han.reichgelt/viz/AssessedValueandSalesData/Dashboard1)). In the public domain.

We see that in census tracts with a high percentage of African Americans (the values range from 1.5% to 95.1%), both the assessed values and the sales price for square foot are among the lowest in St Petersburg. Moreover, the percentage of sales of residential properties in which the sales price is less than the assessed value also tends to be higher in African American census tracts, suggesting that property buyers assign a lower value to properties in African American areas. However, there is a caveat that there are very few sales in predominantly African American census tracts. The following image (Figure 17), which can also be accessed from Reichgelt (2021b) may explain why:

Figure 17

Lower Value to Properties in African American Areas



Note. From “Home Ownership in African American Census Tracts,” by H. Reichgelt, (2021b), Public Tableau.

(<https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/han.reichgelt/viz/HomeOwnershipinAfricanAmericanCensusTracts/Dashboard2>). In the public domain.

The above maps indicate the percentage of African Americans in each census tract and the percentage of all residential properties in a census tract that do not have a homestead exemption. A homestead exemption is granted to owner-occupied residences. It is used as an approximation for the home ownership rate in a specific geography. The image above shows that the percentage of residential properties without homestead exemption is high in predominantly African American census tracts. This of course reflects the reality stemming from national policy that developed “red-lining” that African Americans are less likely to own their homes (Rothstein, 2018). It is also consistent with data for the whole of Pinellas County showing that 35% of households that are Black own their home while 69% of households that are White own their home.

Observation. The following observations are made in regard to home ownership disparities in St. Petersburg.

- Home ownership disparities: Data from the Pinellas County Property Appraiser show that, in line with findings elsewhere, home ownership rates are significantly lower in St. Petersburg census tracks with a large percentage of African American residents than they are in census tracks with a large percentage of White residents.

Resources. The following is a list of resources related to home ownership disparities.

- Home Ownership Remains Strongly Linked to Wealth Building (Kushi, 2020)
- Disparities in Wealth by Race and Ethnicity in the 2019 Survey of Consumer Finances (Bhutta et al., 2020)
- Home Ownership Is the Top Contributor to Household Wealth (Swanson, 2021).
- Renting Partnerships homepage (Renting Partnerships, n.d.)

- In Defense of Neighborhood Trusts (Margulies, 2019)
- Housing Appraisals – Racist Practices (Howell & Korver-Glenn, 2018; 2021)
- Community Control of Land and Housing (Hanna & Green, 2018)
- The Emerging Solidarity Economy - A Primer on Community Ownership of Real Estate (Loh & Love, 2021)
- Keeping Community Control as Community Land Trusts Grow (Axel-Lute, 2021)

Code Violations

To address a possible concern around code violations, we obtained the 2020 Code Violations from the City. We could link this to the property tax data and thus were able to generate code violation information by census tract. However, due to time limitations, we were unable to conduct an in-depth analysis of the data.

Resources

The following are a list of resources related to code violations:

- How Cities Are Paving the Way to Fair Housing (Velasco, 2021)
- Louisville Is Using Zoning Reform to Tackle Inequity (Freeman & Velasco, 2021)
- Equity Review of Land Development Code (Louisvilleky.gov, 2021)

Section V. Areas of Further Research

As we have noted, the new analyses generated for this report were all completed within a compressed time period. Given the time constraints, the quantitative analyses provided just a sampling of initial exemplar analyses. For example, while able to conduct new analyses of data reflecting annual median income, home ownership rates and home values, along with somewhat limited data from the criminal-legal system, the study relied on existing publicly available systems of analyses from the Florida Department of Health's Health Equity Dashboard (2021) (<https://flhealthcharts.com/charts/QASpecial.aspx#MH>) for quantitative data documenting health disparities. Similarly, while no new analyses were conducted to disentangle well-understood disparities in education, with respect to educational outcomes and discipline, we note that the current "Bridging the Gap" (Pinellas County Schools, 2021) initiative led by the Pinellas County School system does regularly provide relevant disparity data updates, with updated reports publicly accessible at <https://www.pcsb.org/BTG>. We also note that for those cases where the study was able to analyze data, most of the data utilized concerned status at the present moment and did not provide an historical perspective. We therefore believe that additional quantitative studies are called for in each of the areas mentioned above.

Education

In 2010, Concerned Organizations for Quality Education of Black Students (COQEBS) was appointed to monitor and enforce how the Pinellas County School (PCS) district is progressing in providing equitable, quality education for Black students, long after separate, early legal cases were brought against the PCS system in 1964 and 1971. COQEBS and the NAACP Legal Defense fund needed to return to court to reopen longstanding cases against the system. As noted above, COQEBS and the district released a comprehensive 10-year Bridging

the Gap Plan in 2018 designed to close the achievement gap between Black students and their peers by 2027. In many ways, the association brokered between COQEBS and the Pinellas County Schools can serve as a model for the systematic addressing of equity gaps in the city. Bridging The Gap (BTG) leaders convene at minimum once-monthly with COQEBS community leaders and stakeholders to review data on latest progress and/or setbacks in closing the achievement gap, guided by concrete and agreed-upon action steps. The plan's six key goals address:

- Graduation rates
- Grade level proficiency
- Participation and performance in accelerated courses
- Disciplinary infractions
- Eligibility for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs
- Minority Hiring

In this manner, the BTG initiative is asking and answering lingering questions such as the extent to which there continue to be differences in educational attainment between Black and White children, equitable allocation of funding appropriations, targets and levels earmarked for schools most of whose population is Black and for schools most of whose population is White, student-to-teacher ratios, differences in teacher qualifications, and retention.

Dedicated focus has also been directed to documenting racial bias in disciplining. Though BTG conversations have been largely around older children, a template exists for asking questions about younger preschool-aged children and school readiness. National data indicate that most children expelled from preschool classrooms are Black boys, and without dedicated awareness educational trajectories get set very early on.

The lessons learned from the COQEBS-led partnership with the school system to begin addressing longstanding disparities, and in particular the system set up to ensure progress and monitor setbacks, serve as one exemplar for how similar structures might be created for the range of issues addressed in this report. Finally, because kindergarten and school readiness are directly affected by the quality of care and experiences of children in out-of-home community childcare settings from birth to age three, concentrated attention to the quality of area childcare settings and strategic provision of sufficient resources and supports to providers serving largely African American child populations so as to significantly improve quality of early care is also much needed.

Health

Going back to 2010, the earliest year available in electronic record, Health Equity Index data collated by the Florida Department of Health, Bureau of Community Health Assessment, Division of Public Health Statistics and Performance Management has documented health disparities between Black and White residents of Pinellas County. The differences in health outcomes between Black residents of St. Petersburg and White residents are evident for both males and females across the lifespan and are well recognized and understood. New research may be able to better explicate local factors such as disparities in access to healthcare, opportunities to exercise, “food deserts”, and related causal and moderating factors. At the same time, the Foundation for a Healthy St. Petersburg has amassed sufficient evidence and local analyses to warrant action on addressing known disparities even as new research is conducted locally.

Understanding both root causes and the intersection of risk factors in affecting health is also critically important, and timely; as just one recent example, disproportionate numbers of

lower income Black residents forced to travel by public transport to work during the 2020-21 COVID-19 pandemic, rather than having opportunities to work from home, led to greater risk of exposure to public contagion of the virus. Social determinants of health are invariably inter-related, and multiple risk factors compound likelihood of untoward outcomes.

Criminal-Legal System

The Clerk of the Court data analyzed in this report show that the percentage of Black residents who were apprehended for offenses that require some discretion on the part of the arresting officers than the percentage of Black residents overall. However, the Clerk of the Court data is very rich, and will allow us to find answers to many additional questions of the type asked by the non-profit Measures for Justice (2021). For example, are there differences between Black and White residents in terms of being arrested while on probation? Are there differences in sentences handed out for similar offenses between Black and White residents? Some of this data is available for Pinellas and further research could limit this to St. Petersburg.

Housing and Home Ownership

Analysis on home ownership and house values used data obtained from the Pinellas County Property Appraiser. However, the analysis was limited to high-level questions, such as the relationship between home ownership rates and percentage of Black residents by census tract, or its relationship to values assessed by the Pinellas Country Tax Appraiser for tax purposes and sales values. However, the data is fine grained and would allow one to drill down to a lower level of detail. It is for example possible to determine the address of property owners who do not claim a homestead exemption, which in turn can shed light on the question on the number of absent landlords and the number of properties they own in each census tract.

However, while the data are very fine-grained, they do not allow for historical analysis. Fortunately, census data do, and further study could be conducted to discover historical trends in home ownership, and the distribution of Black residents. Has St. Petersburg become more racially segregated? Or less? What were the long-term after-effects of redlining policies?

A further rich data source is the information on home mortgages and home mortgage applications maintained by the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau under the Home Mortgages Disclosure Act (Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, n.d.). A preliminary analysis suggests that Black mortgage applicants are rejected at twice the rate of White mortgage applicants at the same debt-to-income level. The data allow us to probe questions such as

- What are the reasons for the higher level of rejection for Black applicants?
- Are there differences between different financial institutions?
- Are there differences between census tracts in terms of the percentage of Black applicants who are rejected? If there are, what are those census tracts and are we seeing a de facto re-instatement of red-lining policies? (Mitchell & Franco, 2018)

Part of the reason the study emphasized housing was that home ownership is one of the most widely used measures to indicate the ability to draw upon that wealth to respond to economic crises (Gauthier, 2015), or opportunities such as access to higher education. It is also the best indicator that shows the transfer wealth from one generation to the next. However, there are also more direct measures of wealth by census tract. How do these compare with the percentage of Black residents in each census tract?

Recent studies that show that the "... variation in appraisal methods coupled with appraisers' racialized perceptions of neighborhoods perpetuates neighborhood racial disparities in

home value” (Howell & Korver-Glenn, 2018, p.473). This analysis could be done for the St Petersburg-Pinellas County area.

Section VI. Recommendations

Based on the evidence reviewed, and given the power and influence of the circumstances outlined in this report, the following immediate initial action steps are recommended:

1. Continue support for the work started in this study. Recommendations 2-5 are offered as a closeout to this initial phase of this project. This phase of the report included research, examination, and documentation of the history of structural racism in the City of St. Petersburg. This report was undertaken and authored over a time-compressed, intensive six-month study period through the summer and fall of 2021. The team started a second phase of this work, sharing the findings and obtaining additional feedback from the community. This work began in October 2021 and recognizes that residents' lived experiences in the city are essential to help affirm, challenge, validate and strengthen the report's recommendations. We recommend that this continuation be supported.
2. Create an equity department within the purview Office of the Mayor. The role of the Director would include an annual equity assessment with input from community, liaising with the budget committee to negotiate adequate funds for needed city projects, and staying on top of data to bring important issues to the notice of the city and its residents in a timely fashion.
3. Create and implement an effective accountability strategy buttressed by measurable outcomes that are tracked over time with disaggregated data. Taking this step will allow the city to monitor and incrementally improve progress and performance until equitable outcomes are achieved. This accountability strategy should include a

- commitment to a race equity review of existing city policies and practices and of all future proposed policies and practices.
4. Take action to advance the unanimous approval of City Council for the motion to create an African American Quality of Life Sunshine Committee to serve as a permanent resident race equity board or commission, thereby helping to ensure sustainability of the recommended transformation, inform, and drive continual progress. The performance monitoring by and input from this resident commission will increase the likelihood that informed, continuous improvement toward equity will become part of the organizational structure and culture. It is recommended that this becomes a permanent way of conducting business in the city.
 5. Evaluate the possibility of implementing a reparative approach to address disparities that have been made visible from the data and narratives of this and other reports. In the community conversations, residents focused on promises made and not kept regarding housing and economic development in the aftermath of the I-275 and Tropicana Field intrusions and advocated that systematic planning be undertaken to insure affordable housing and other forms of restitution and reparations.

“Reparations are, for them, the most tangible manifestation of the efforts of the state to remedy the harms they have suffered” (de Greiff, 2008, p.1-2)

According to Liberations Ventures (2021), the idea of repairing and making healthy stands on the foundation of four components:

“**Reckoning** – Understanding or grappling with the what, how, and why of actions that have contributed to harm.

Acknowledgement – Admission that harm has been done.

Accountability – Ownership and willingness to take responsibility for harmful actions, commitment to non-repetition.

Redress – Acts of restitution, compensation, and rehabilitation. These are proactive steps taken to embed racial justice into systems and “heal the wound.””

(<https://www.liberationventures.org/>)

The specifics of reparative actions can be determined based on a process that includes the input of those most impacted by the racism manifested in the policies and practices, and narratives clarified in this report. The nature of the reparation can range based on the community's preferences and may include housing, reforms in the criminal-legal system, free health services, or tertiary education. Thus, it is the community that should provide detailed insight on the reparative actions. This process of healing and making amends, needed at national, state, and local scales can begin here in St Petersburg.

We emphasize that community wisdom and experience are and will continue to be the most essential element of this ongoing work in the weeks, months and years ahead, especially as planning and implementation begins and progresses. The best guidance going forward will come from residents of the community whose wisdom and knowledge have historically not been in a position of authority and guidance.

We also emphasize that even as the above recommendations are being planned and implemented, more immediate current-day action is needed. Every day in St. Petersburg, the city’s BIPOC residents suffer disproportionately. Citizens remain hungry and unhoused. Babies and mothers die at unacceptably high rates during childbirth and the perinatal period. Black

adults in certain census tracks continue to suffer preventable illnesses and die years earlier than residents of more affluent and Whiter areas. Black men continue to be harassed, arrested, and disproportionately incarcerated with harsher sentences. Families fight to endure on much less than living wages, Black students are still differentially targeted and pushed out of schools, and families continue to be torn apart. Action to quell these still-rising tides cannot begin soon enough.

Section VII. Implication and Concluding Remarks

Across the country, residents and community organizations, local governments, business leaders, funders, and policymakers are striving to implement plans, policies, and programs aimed at healthier, more equitable communities that foster inclusive growth and broad community wellbeing. These efforts recognize that equity – just and fair inclusion into a society in which all participate and prosper – is fundamental to a future that works better for everyone. This is an “equity dividend.” The City of St Petersburg made a bold beginning by seeking to better understand systemic inequities that have diminished economic and social success for residents of color. An honest, transparent review of race equity affords unequivocal evidence that a racist past is inextricably, and many instances, nearly invisibly woven into every system and dimension of current life, regardless of sector. This fact demands ongoing and systematic reviews and analyses of data, sector by sector, so that specific new actions that are developed to decrease and eventually eliminate disparities can be evaluated for their successes or setbacks.

This report provides only beginning glimpses as to the sheer depth and breadth of how racism has affected diminished opportunities and outcomes in every sector of life. Nonetheless, its findings provide a sound basis upon which select, intentional, and effectual action steps can be taken to help guide the City of St. Petersburg’s pursuit of equity for its citizens.

City Systems Introspection

Thorough, routine review of existing policies, practices and accepted narratives is a pivotal step forward. St. Petersburg can benefit by reviewing examples from around the country in which local governments have already made such a commitment to race equity. It is fortunate that 2021 saw considerable work related to race equity undertaken in St. Petersburg, including a

Charter Review Commission and a city-approved resolution on Racism as a Public Health Crisis. Each of these advances contained specific recommendations aligned with findings from this study for advancing race equity in the city. These earlier recommendations are of value and can themselves be implemented. Having recognized race equity as a priority, the city can choose to move to instill race equity as a standard, incorporating equity into both policy development and departmental expectations. An equity department within the Office of the Mayor, led by an equity officer cognizant of political and cultural norms of the time can support ethical leadership and help the city identify accepted policies and practices that are unseen carryovers from the 1920s contributing to reduced opportunities or disproportionate outcomes.

Data-Driven Metrics

Progress can be consistent to the extent that upcoming efforts use robust metrics explicitly centered on race equity. Data systems can plan to measure whether equitable practices are leading to real changes such as higher household income and greater wealth for all community residents -- and if they are succeeding in lowering and eventually eliminating disparities between racial groups. Disaggregated data regularly monitored and tied to performance are key to an effective accountability strategy. Beyond monitoring the factors highlighted in this Report, future data-driven efforts can identify specific neighborhoods in Black St Petersburg where issues with employment, housing, public health, criminal-legal bias and transportation exert undue influence.

Sharing Power with Residents

The advocacy organization, Voices for Racial Justice, explains that “authentic community engagement is grounded in relationships based on mutual respect and that acknowledge each person’s added value to the developing solutions.” Analysis from this Report

shed cold light on a century-old, entrenched power differential that has shaped priorities in the city of St. Petersburg. Creation of viable solutions to promote equity hence cannot rely solely on the judgments of “content” experts (i.e., professionals, organizational staff, service providers, and leaders with formal power possessing knowledge, tools, and resources to address the issue). Rather, unless guided by the earned, credible wisdom of city residents who voice the lived experience of suffering through modern-day inequities – the city’s “context” experts (i.e., those with lived experience of the situation, elders, adults, and youth) - the likelihood of achieving changes that will bring significant impact is reduced.

This said, mere inclusion of context expertise - albeit progress – would itself be insufficient. True resident leadership means that residents and grassroots organizations would be at the center of efforts to increase race equity. While traditional stakeholders such as government agencies, employers, workforce development providers, business leaders, and familiar community-based organizations would also participate, adopting this new approach will represent a shift in power and authority to residents - which should include voting on decisions that affect residents most. This approach will also support efforts to organize residents to advocate for change. A resident race equity commission and/or board, once in place, must not sunset but rather become a permanent part of the organizational structure and culture.

Power of Influence

Even as the city identifies and takes direct steps under its own direct purview, it will be important for it to use its power of influence to engage other systems at different levels of government, and systems in other sectors to be similarly involved in this work of introspection and intention. It can do so through the power of invitation, convening and collaboration. Impacting race equity within the city will also demand that attention be given to all intersecting

factors that impact resident health and mental health, as their combined influence is staggering and overpowering. Local government must find housing related solutions for low-income categories. Disparities in access to medical care and in the provision of culturally attuned and quality care, so evident in health data on Black communities, must be acknowledged and eliminated in both policy and practice. Progress being made in identifying and addressing educational inequities must be sustained. And the direct, experienced impact of all these intersecting factors on parents and grandparents, presently raising the next generation of city residents, must remain at the forefront of all conversations and efforts.

The emotional health and thriving of babies and young children, which becomes the platform for physical health through the lifespan, will always be directly shaped and affected by the physical and psychological well-being of the adults who care for them. Reducing differential treatment and outside-the-family stressors will hence have lifelong benefits on the health and well-being of Black babies, children, men, and women. Enduring, long-term equity gaps will close once programming takes to heart and addresses the range of social determinants that harm – or strengthen – individuals and families.

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Appendix A: Median Earned Income for Pinellas by non-Hispanic Race

Demographic	Median earned income
All	
Overall	\$35,862
White	\$37,048
Black or African American	\$27,000
Other	\$30,739
With associate degree or equivalent	
Overall	\$36,033
White	\$37,029
Black or African American	\$31,421
Other	\$31,739
With bachelor's degree	
Overall	\$50,000
White	\$50,207
Black or African American	\$43,990
Other	\$45,000
With master's degree	
Overall	\$56,101
White	\$57,065
Black or African American	\$46,621
Other	\$52,926
With advanced degree	
Overall	\$63,511
White	\$64,937
Black or African American	\$51,232
Other	\$62,000

Note. Adapted from IPUMS (2018).

Appendix B: Median Annual Earned Income for Bachelor's Degree Holders by Field

Field	Median earned income
Education administration and teaching	
Overall	\$42,340
White	\$42,319
Black or African American	\$45,000
Social sciences	
Overall	\$45,000
White	\$46,518
Black or African American	\$43,990
Other	\$27,832
Medical and health sciences	
Overall	\$57,000
White	\$57,145
Black or African American	\$47,609
Other	\$58,296
Business	
Overall	\$54,463
White	\$55,043
Black or African American	\$37,014
Other	\$52,000

Note. Adapted from IPUMS (2018).

Appendix C: Median Annual Earned Income for Master's Degree Holders by Field

Field	Median earned income
Education administration and teaching	
Overall	\$46,000
White	\$46,000
Black or African American	\$45,000
Business	
Overall	\$72,653
White	\$75,000
Black or African American	\$54,753
Other	\$68,048

Note. Adapted from IPUMS (2018).

**Appendix D: Median Annual Earned Income Advanced Degree Holders by Field (Master's,
Professional Degree, or Doctoral Degree)**

Field	Median earned income
Education administration and teaching	
Overall	\$47,000
White	\$47,000
Black or African American	\$51,867
Medical and health sciences	
Overall	\$81,971
White	\$81,738
Black or African American	\$75,154
Other	\$93,702
Business	
Overall	\$74,096
White	\$76,848
Black or African American	\$54,753
Other	\$62,000

Note. Adapted from IPUMS (2018).

Appendix E: IPUMS (2006)

Demographic	Median earned income
All	
Overall	\$29,800
White	\$30,000
Black or African American	\$20,000
Other	\$23,000
With associate degree or equivalent	
Overall	\$35,000
White	\$36,000
Black or African American	\$27,600
Other	\$27,000
With bachelor's degree	
Overall	\$42,000
White	\$45,000
Black or African American	\$39,000
Other	\$28,000

Note. Adapted from IPUMS (2006).