

# STL Equity Matters

By Erika Whitfield • Feb 28, 2022  
Smart Brevity™ count: 4 mins... 1031 words

**Welcome to the sixth edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters**

**How it works:** We shine a light on how race is lived in our region.

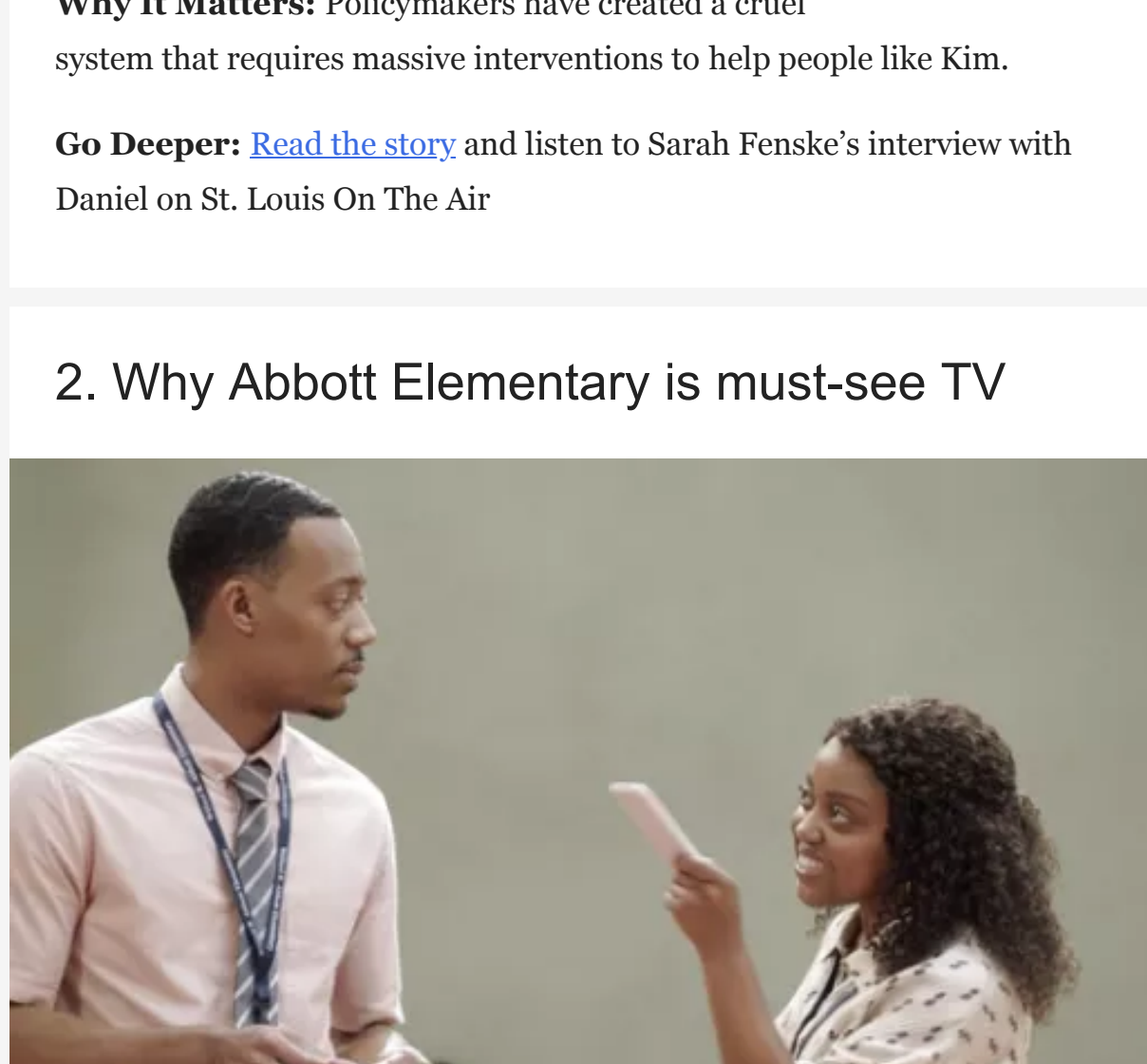
**Who is behind this:** This newsletter is brought to you by [Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson](#), a non-profit racial equity storytelling project.

**In this edition:**

- **Kim Daniel** finally lands an affordable, safe place to call home. It took a decade to complete that perilous journey.
- **Erika Whitfield** tells why Abbott Elementary is must-see TV.
- **Dr. Katrina Thompson Moore**, an associate professor in the departments of History and African American Studies at Saint Louis University, addresses “the culture of slavery” then and now.
- **Sylvester Brown** discusses vaccine hesitancy among African Americans.
- Also mentioned in this newsletter: **Maxine Clark**, **Lindy Drew**, **Gerald Early**, **Rosalind Early**, **Sarah Fenske**, and many more.

*Let's dive in.*

## 1. Broken road to the Promised Land



Brian Munoz/St. Louis Public Radio

By Richard H. Weiss

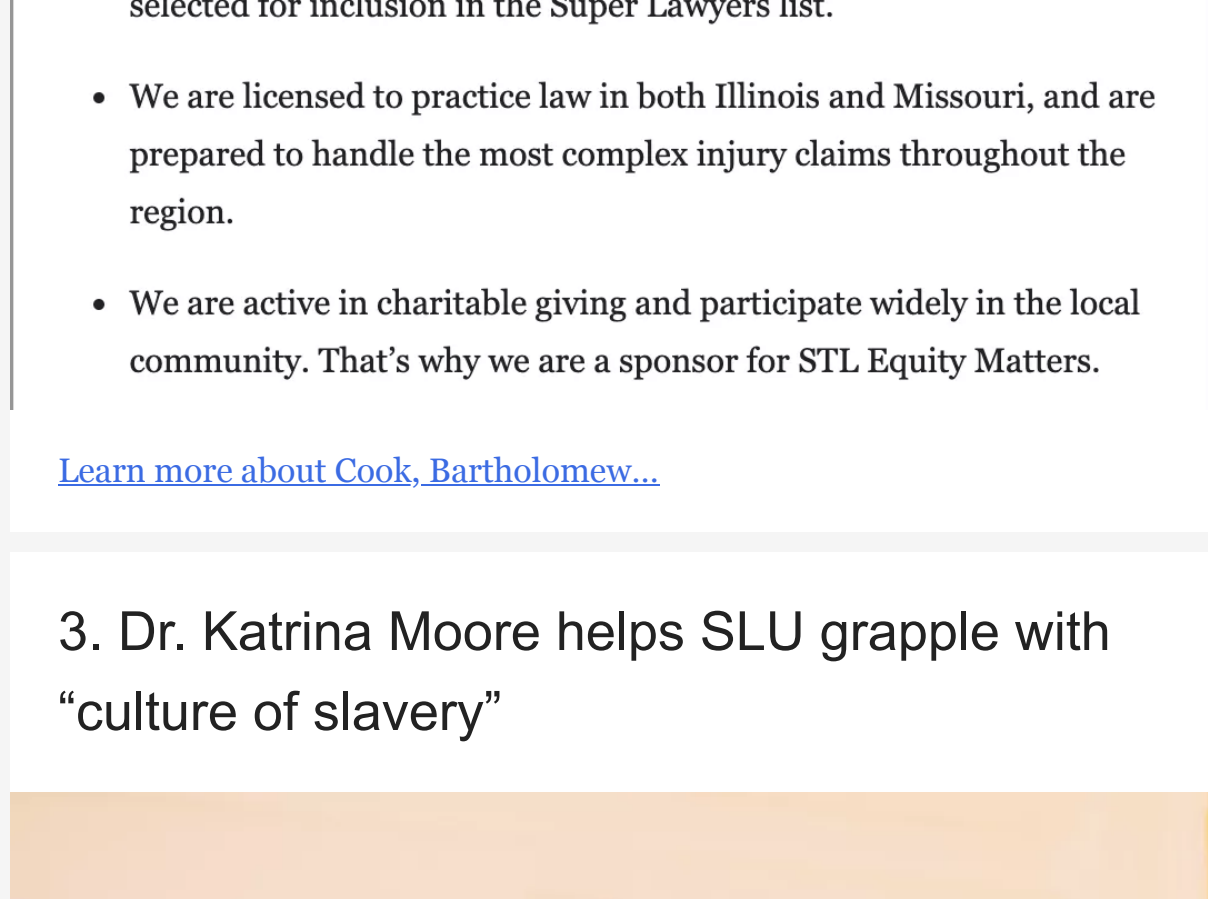
**What's Happening:** Kim Daniel's dream of safer, more secure housing nearly vanished due to illness and a crippling bureaucracy.

**The Dilemma:** After spending two months in hospitals and rehab centers, and two more weeks fretting, fuming and living in a hotel room, Daniel had to wait and wonder. When would the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development act on her request for an increase in the value of her Section 8 voucher? It was supposed to be her golden ticket out of her increasingly dangerous neighborhood into a safer place to live.

**Why It Matters:** Policymakers have created a cruel system that requires massive interventions to help people like Kim.

**Go Deeper:** [Read the story](#) and listen to Sarah Fenske's interview with Daniel on St. Louis On The Air

## 2. Why Abbott Elementary is must-see TV



Quinta Brunson with Tyler James Williams. Brunson is both the creator and in the leading role in Abbott Elementary on ABC. (Photo from ABC website)

By Erika Whitfield

**What's happening:** Abbott Elementary is this year's breakout sitcom hit.

**Why it matters:** You've seen plenty of classroom comedies from *Welcome Back Kotter* to *Saved by the Bell*, but nothing like Quinta Brunson's Abbott Elementary, which focuses much more on the educators than the kids.

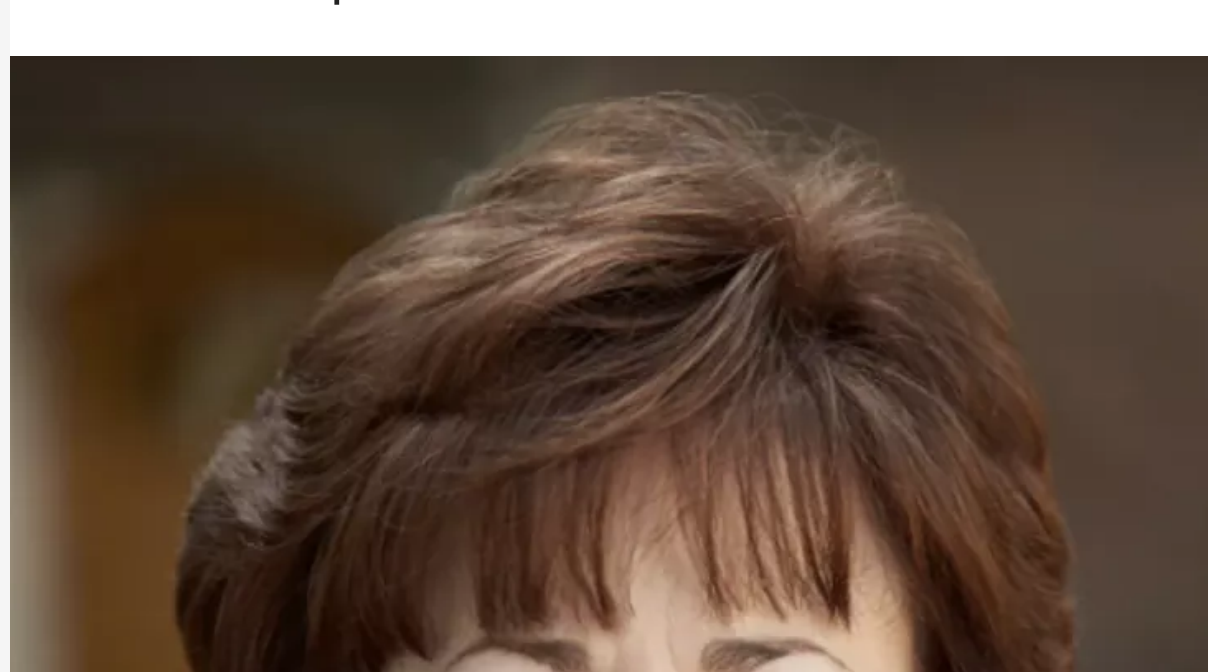
**My take:** Not just a mash-up of colorful characters, this show addresses major issues in education. For example:

- Gifted classes that can isolate and misidentify students
- Ethical issues related to fundraising efforts
- Reading programs that come and go before students achieve mastery

And yet, the show is hilarious. We laugh to keep from crying.

**Go deeper:** [Five reasons to watch.](#)

## Now A Word From Our Sponsor



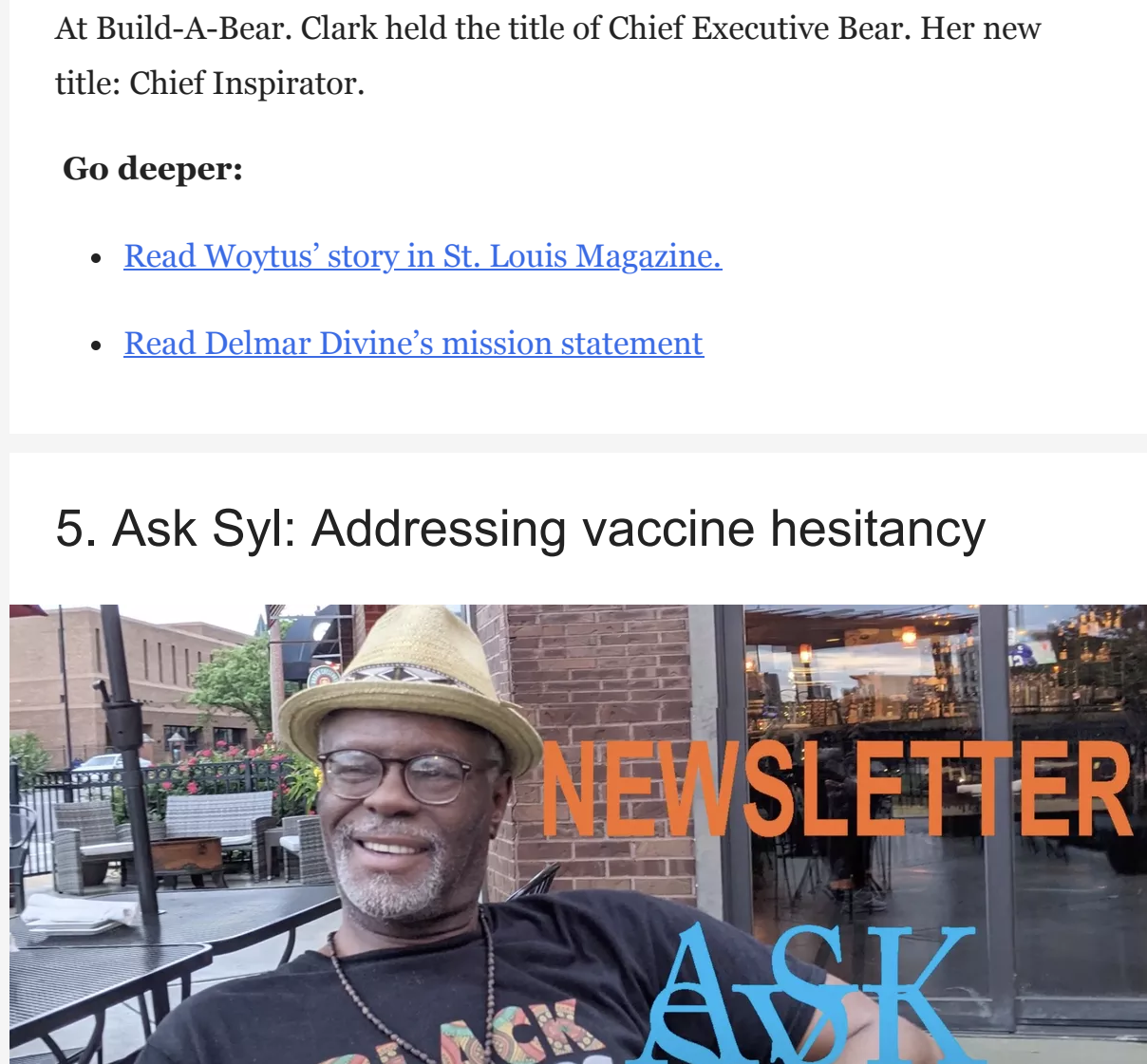
**The bottom line:** We are the leading local, personal injury attorneys

**Who we are:** Cook, Bartholomew, Shevlin, Cook & Jones, LLP in Belleville, Illinois, brings together the diverse experience of some of the most highly recognized plaintiffs' attorneys in the area.

- We work collaboratively to deliver optimal counsel and resolution for our clients. Members of our firm are AV-rated and have been selected for inclusion in the Super Lawyers list.
- We are licensed to practice law in both Illinois and Missouri, and are prepared to handle the most complex injury claims throughout the region.
- We are active in charitable giving and participate widely in the local community. That's why we are a sponsor for STL Equity Matters.

[Learn more about Cook, Bartholomew...](#)

## 3. Dr. Katrina Moore helps SLU grapple with “culture of slavery”



Dr. Katrina Thompson Moore, an associate professor in the departments of History and African American Studies. (Photo provided by Moore)

By Brian Guerin

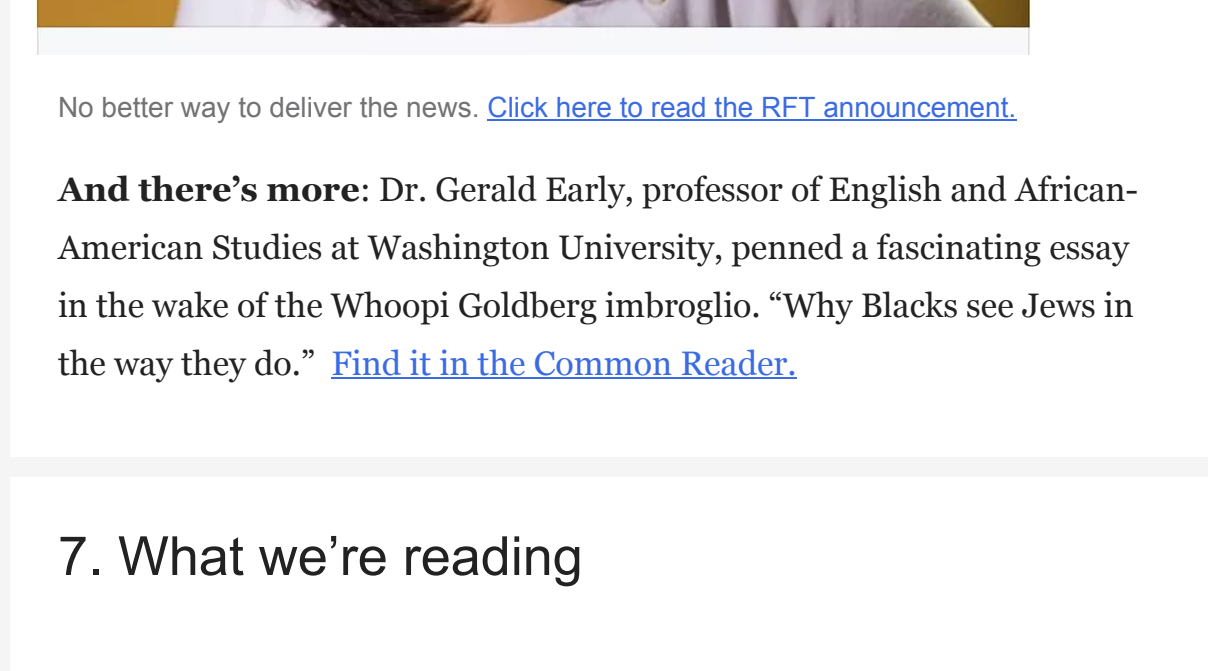
**What's happening:** In recent years, Saint Louis University, along with other Jesuit institutions, has been coming to grips with a legacy of slavery. Dr. Katrina Thompson Moore is among several scholars locally who are researching the past, including talking with descendants of slaves who helped build the university. They put these issues in perspective for students, alumni, administrators and community stakeholders. “I specialize in the institution of slavery and the culture of slavery that has continued today,” Moore says.

**Background:** “When I first got here in 2008, no one was talking about the university's ties to slavery,” Moore said. “I would say the average student still doesn't know. I know that the descendants of the enslaved who we have found want more traction, more activity. And so do I. I want outreach everywhere.”

**Going forward:** “We have a SLU model — we all become Billikens — men and women for others. We need to recognize those others included enslaved people who helped build our institution.”

**Go deeper:** [Moore's thoughts on slavery scholarship and community outreach.](#)

## 4. Chief Inspirator



Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop and Delmar Divine.

**What's happening:** Maxine Clark, founder of Build-A-Bear Workshop has over the last six years been building a home for social service innovators at the site of the old St. Luke's Hospital at Delmar Boulevard and Belt Avenue. Within a year, as many as 1,000 people will be working in offices and living in apartments at the site, Clark tells St. Louis Magazine's Amanda Woytus.

**Why it matters:** Clark, along with executive director Jorge Riopiedre, aim to demonstrate how close collaboration among residents, social service providers, business and civic leaders can revitalize underserved neighborhoods.

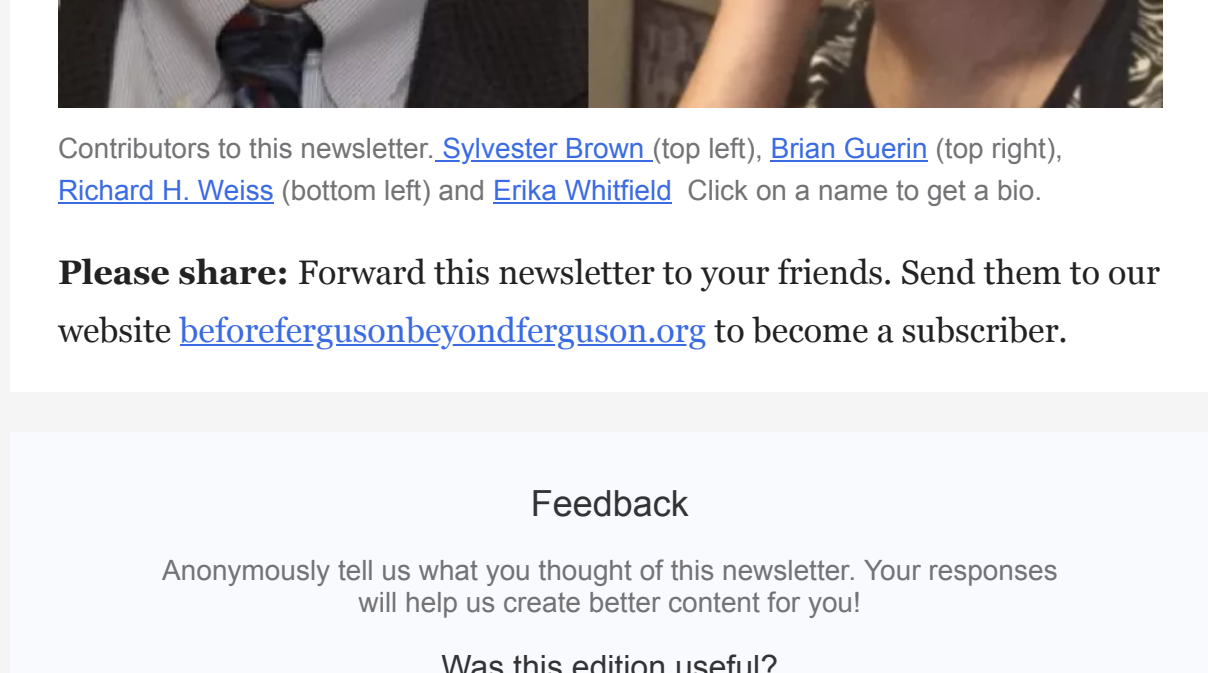
**The concept:** Clark believes that bringing people together to work on site can lead to bigger, better, bolder initiatives than any one organization can accomplish on its own. “Everybody's doing hard work,” she tells Woytus. “But can it be more helpful? Can it be more impactful?”

At Build-A-Bear, Clark held the title of Chief Executive Bear. Her new title: Chief Inspirator.

**Go deeper:**

- [Read Woytus' story in St. Louis Magazine.](#)
- [Read Delmar Divine's mission statement](#)

## 5. Ask Syl: Addressing vaccine hesitancy



Send your questions to Sylvester at [sylvesterbj@gmail.com](mailto:sylvesterbj@gmail.com) and we promise a thoughtful response that will be shared with the community. If your question is chosen, we'll send you a \$25 gift card to Northwest Coffee.

Sylvester Brown, intrepid columnist, author and social justice warrior, offers guidance to those of us trying to navigate in a region fraught with racial tension.

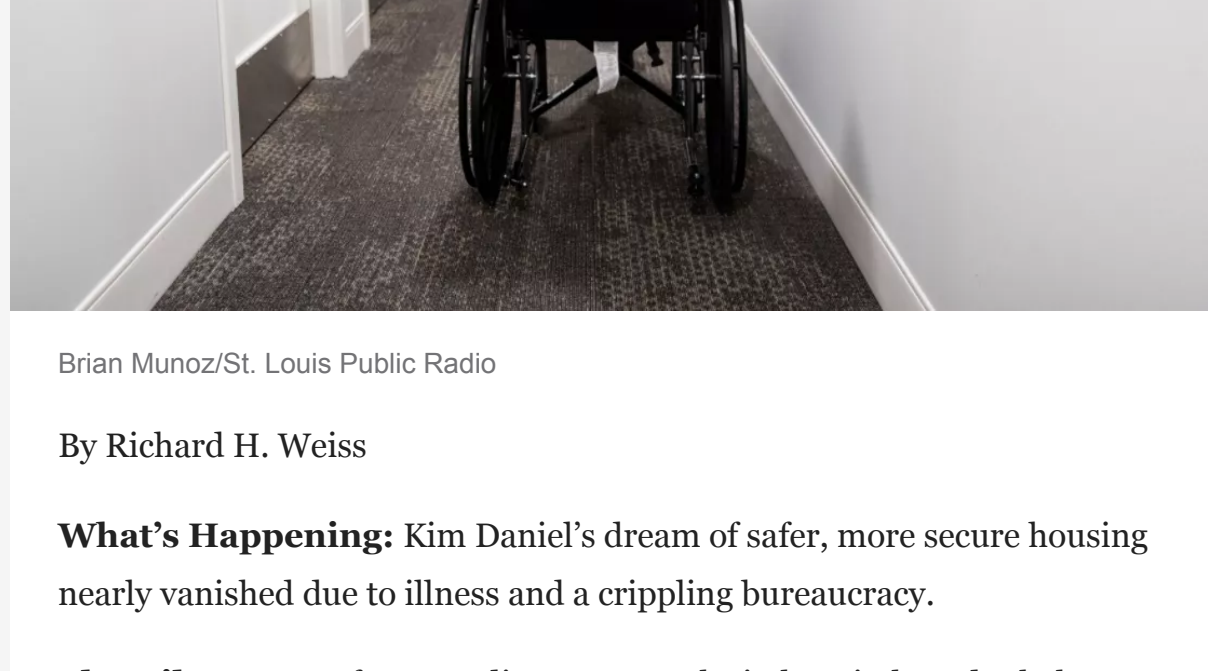
**Question:** “In addition to your long history of covering systemic issues like racism and inequality, you’ve written about vaccine hesitancy – which is at heart a yes or no question for each of us. Do you think journalists can change hearts and minds on a question like that?” — S.F.

**Syl responds:** As a black man, writer, and researcher, I share much of the mistrust many African Americans have toward white institutions. But I don't believe the virus was man-made to reduce the population, as many anti-vaxxers claim.

**Context matters:** For me, walking the fine line between my biases and my beliefs relies on being upfront and honest about the genesis of those fears. My goal is to respectfully educate so my readers can make informed decisions about getting vaccinated.

**Go deeper:** [Syl's thoughts](#) on the seeds of medical mistrust and how that has played out during the pandemic.

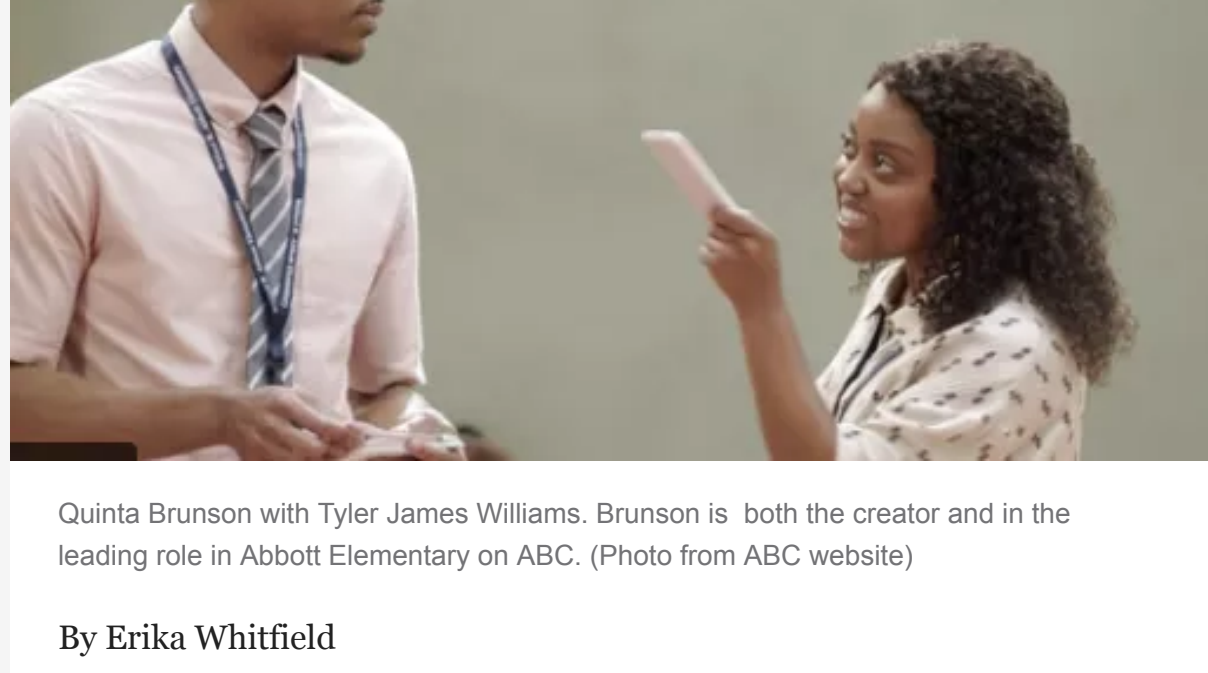
## 6. The Early Show



No better way to deliver the news. [Click here to read the RFT announcement.](#)

**And there's more:** Dr. Gerald Early, professor of English and African-American Studies at Washington University, penned a fascinating essay in the wake of the Whoopi Goldberg imbroglio. “Why Blacks see Jews in the way they do.” [Find it in the Common Reader.](#)

## 7. What we're reading



#HOSTLBook

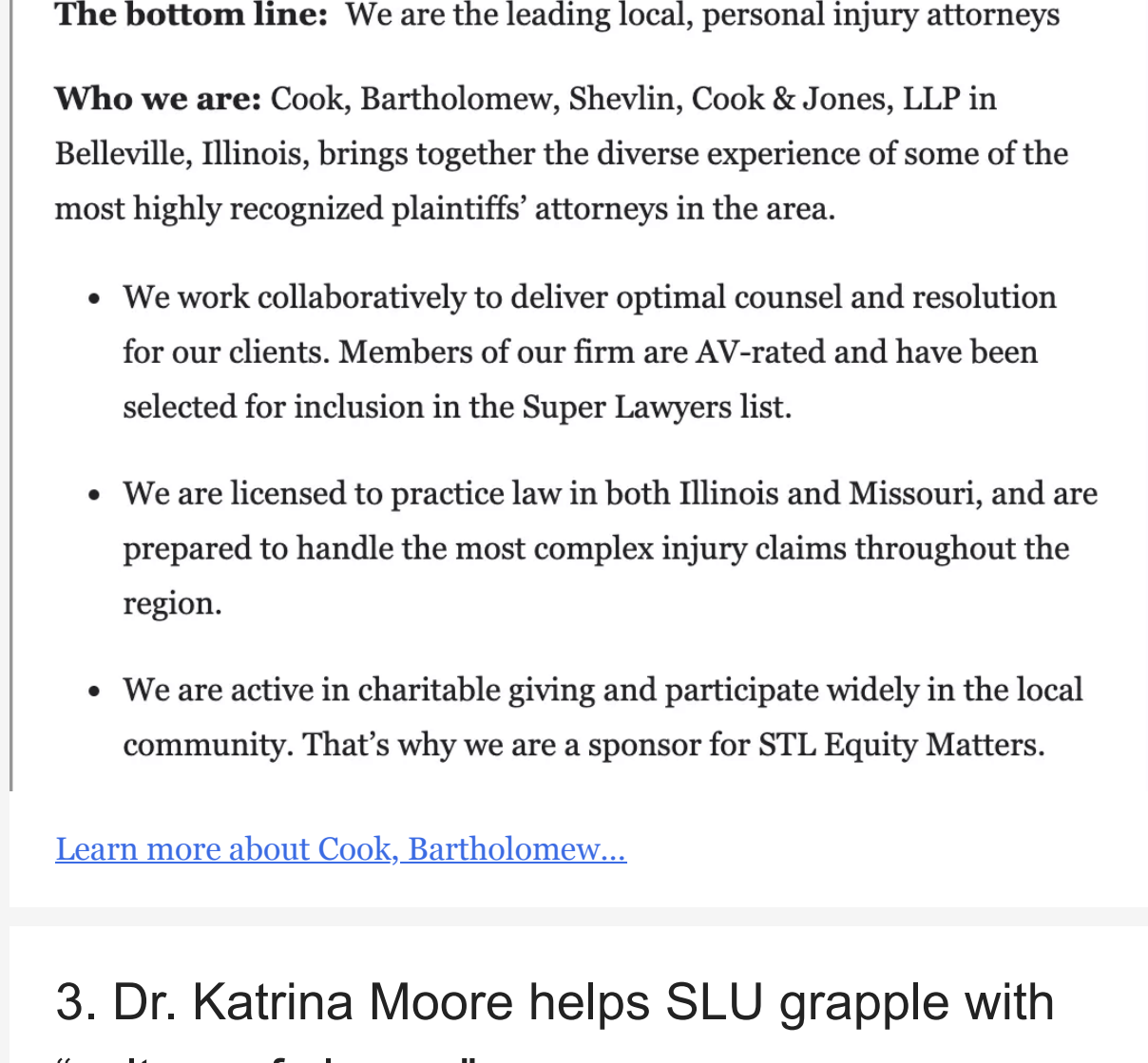
[humansofstl.org](http://humansofstl.org)

Congrats to Linda New, Dessa Somerside, Elaine Cha (also a Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson board member) and the entire HOSTL team. [Click here to pre-order.](#)

[What equity means to banker/civic leader Orvin Kimbrough](#)

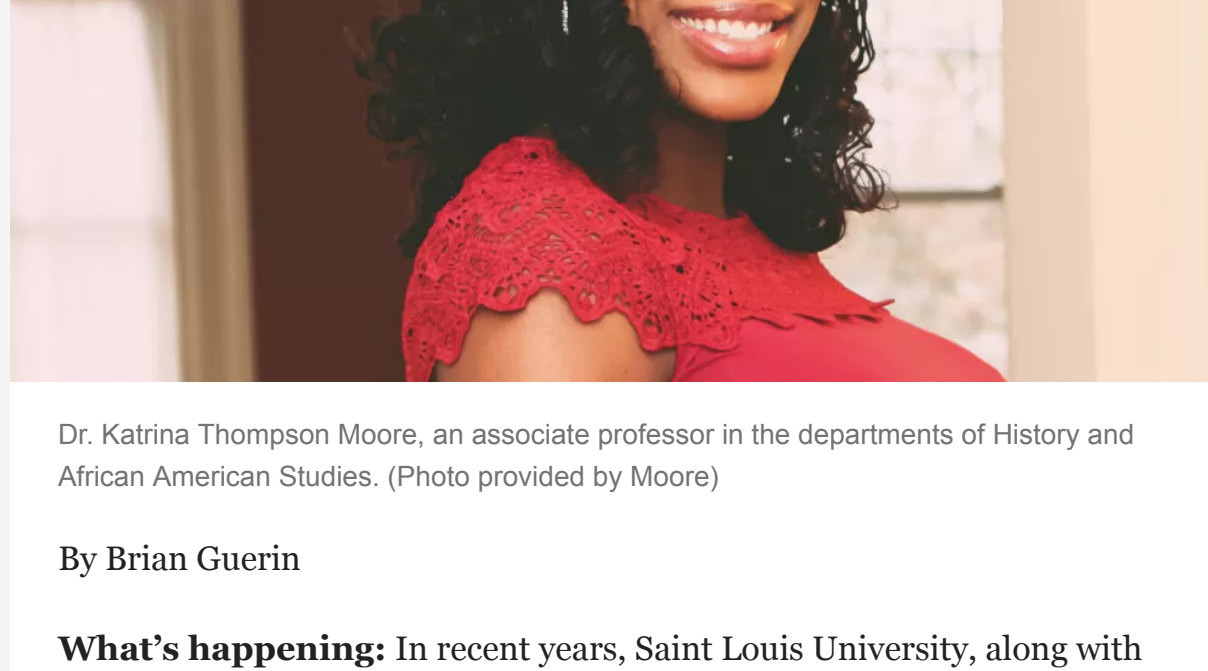
[Wentzville School Board reverses The Bluest Eye book ban](#)

[Thoughts on losing artist Vernon Smith to COVID during Black History Month](#)



Contributors to this newsletter: [Sylvester Brown](#) (top left), [Brian Guerin](#) (top right), [Richard H. Weiss](#) (bottom left) and [Erika Whitfield](#) (bottom right). Click on a name to get a bio.

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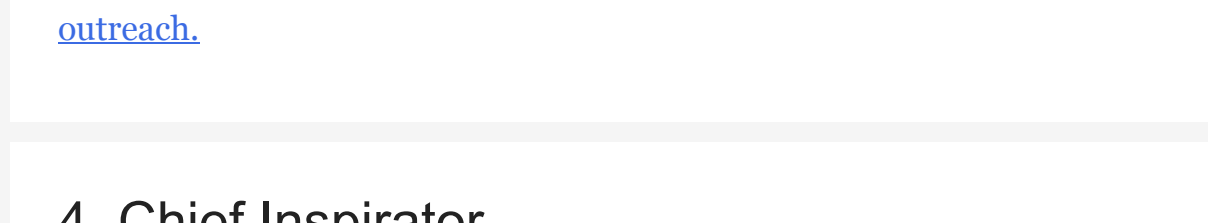


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