



STL Equity Matters

By Erika Whitfield • Jun 20, 2022
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Welcome to the eleventh edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters ... Happy Juneteenth Day...

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

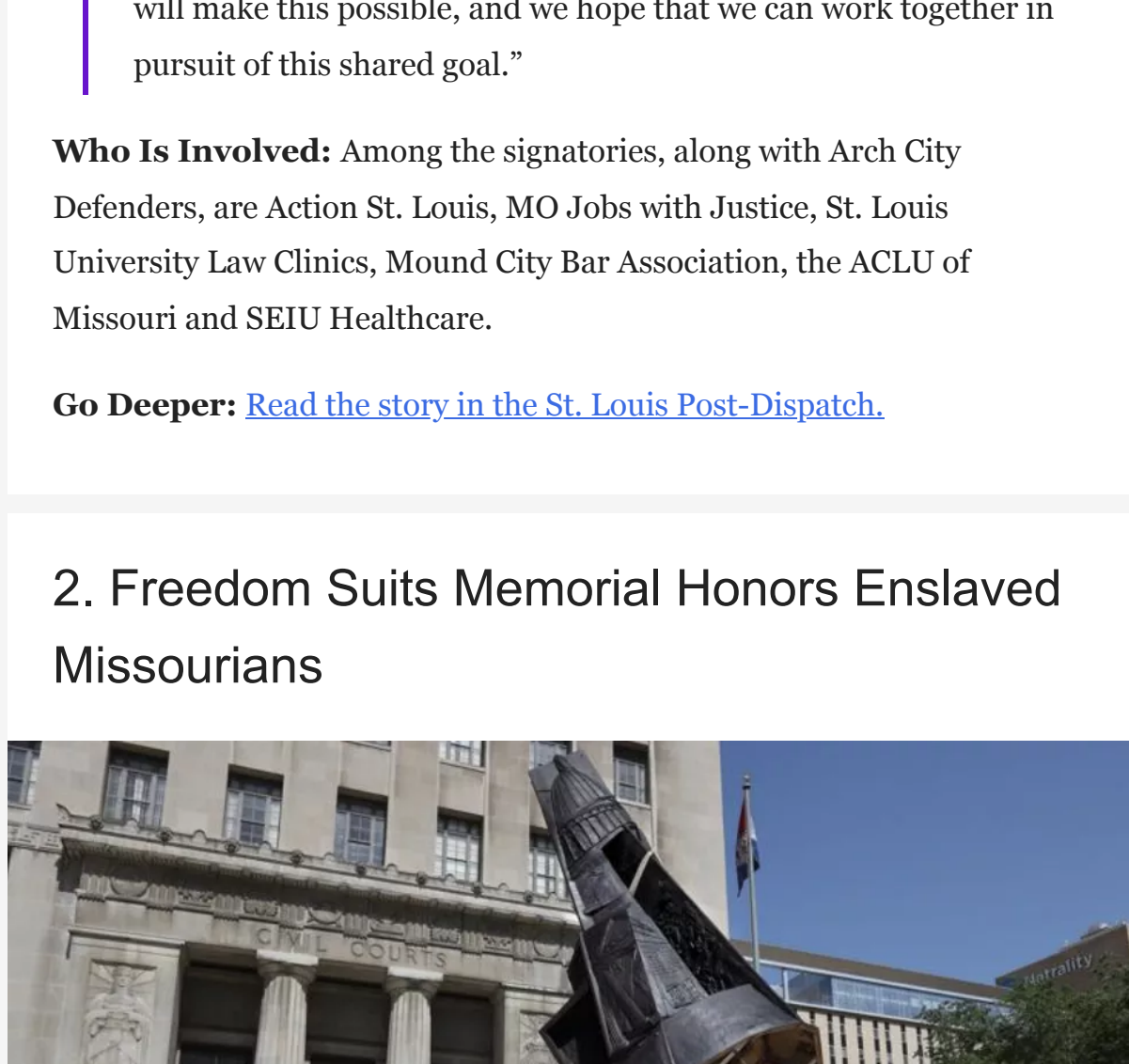
Who is behind this: This newsletter is brought to you by [Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson](#), a non-profit racial equity storytelling project.

In this edition:

- **Dana Reick of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch** reports that 30 social justice organizations are jointly calling on the city to form a reparations commission.
- Journalists **Rae Ellen Bichell** and **Cara Anthony** of Kaiser Health News write about how caregivers use race as “medical shorthand” often to the detriment of their patients.
- **The FAM**, a non-profit, has in its first year helped 33 Black individuals or families become homeowners, according to Andrea Smith of the Ladue News.
- **Randy Sanderson** debuts *My Journey as THE ONLY*, a memoir chronicling his boyhood in north St. Louis and his climb up the corporate ladder at two Fortune 500 corporations.
- **Judge David Mason** takes pride in the new Freedom Suits Memorial statue at the Civil Courts Building. The dedication ceremony takes place at 5 p.m. Monday, June 20.
- **Lea-Rachel Kosnik**, a professor at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, shares Chapter 5 about the challenges a white mother faces in adopting a Black child in a novel we are serializing at Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson.

Let's dive in.

1. A Joint Call For Reparations



What's New: Thirty social justice organizations have called on the city of St. Louis to create a reparations commission, Dana Reick reports in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. The memo circulated through Arch City Defenders calls for a two-step approach:

1. Establish a commission to determine “the size, scope, and impact of racial oppression and exclusion” in the city. The commission would then publish a report of its findings.
2. Outline how to implement the plan.

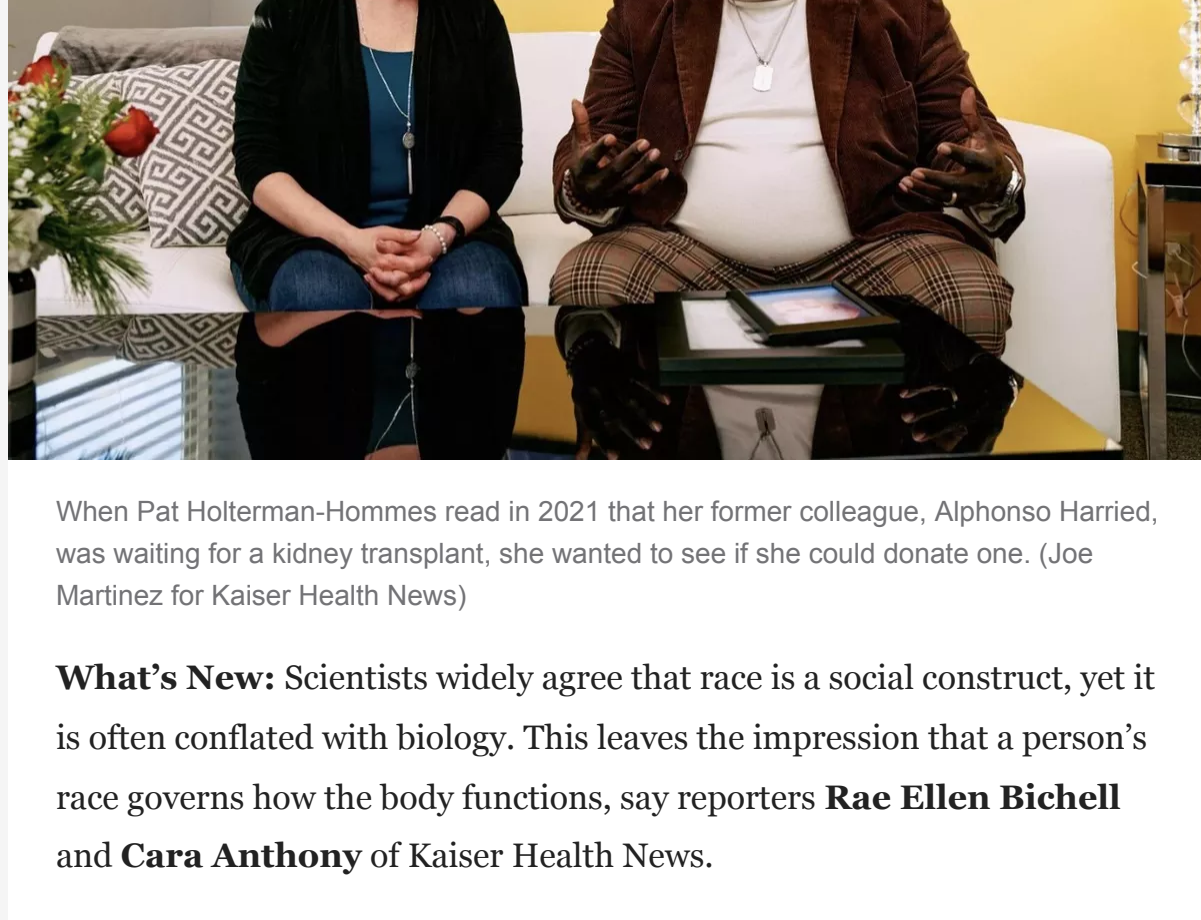
Why It Matters: Proponents say the impact of slavery continues to this day with exclusion from home ownership, inequities in education, lack of access to health care and transit.

“Now is the time for the City of St. Louis to wrestle fully with its history, commit to a process of repair and healing, and move forward into a just future for all of its people,” the organizations stated in a joint memo. “We stand ready to support a process that will make this possible, and we hope that we can work together in pursuit of this shared goal.”

Who Is Involved: Among the signatories, along with Arch City Defenders, are Action St. Louis, MO Jobs with Justice, St. Louis University Law Clinics, Mound City Bar Association, the ACLU of Missouri and SEIU Healthcare.

Go Deeper: [Read the story in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.](#)

2. Freedom Suits Memorial Honors Enslaved Missourians



Workers installed the Freedom Suits Memorial statue Wednesday, June 16 at the Civil Courts Building. (Photo by David Carson, St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

What's New: A statue unveiling Monday caps a decade-long, million-dollar effort to commemorate the efforts of Missouri slaves to win their freedom through the courts.

Why It Matters: The work recognizes hundreds of lawsuits filed by slaves and their pro-abolition attorneys in Missouri courts. Though many cases were lost, the suits provided necessary momentum for ending slavery in the U.S. St. Louis was the country's most active legal venue for such cases for nearly 60 years, noted St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter Valerie Schremp Hahn.

Stepping Up: St. Louis Circuit Judge David Mason is the founder of the effort. He enlisted a cross-section of civic leaders to support the project. Preston Jackson, a retired professor at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, created the bronze 14-foot statue. It shows a woman at a judge's bench, under a depiction of the rotunda of the Old Courthouse.

It's about coming together, but in coming together there has to be knowledge. Whether it's negative or positive, you have to know why things happened and how, so that you can have a better tomorrow.
 — Sculptor Preston Jackson

Go deeper:

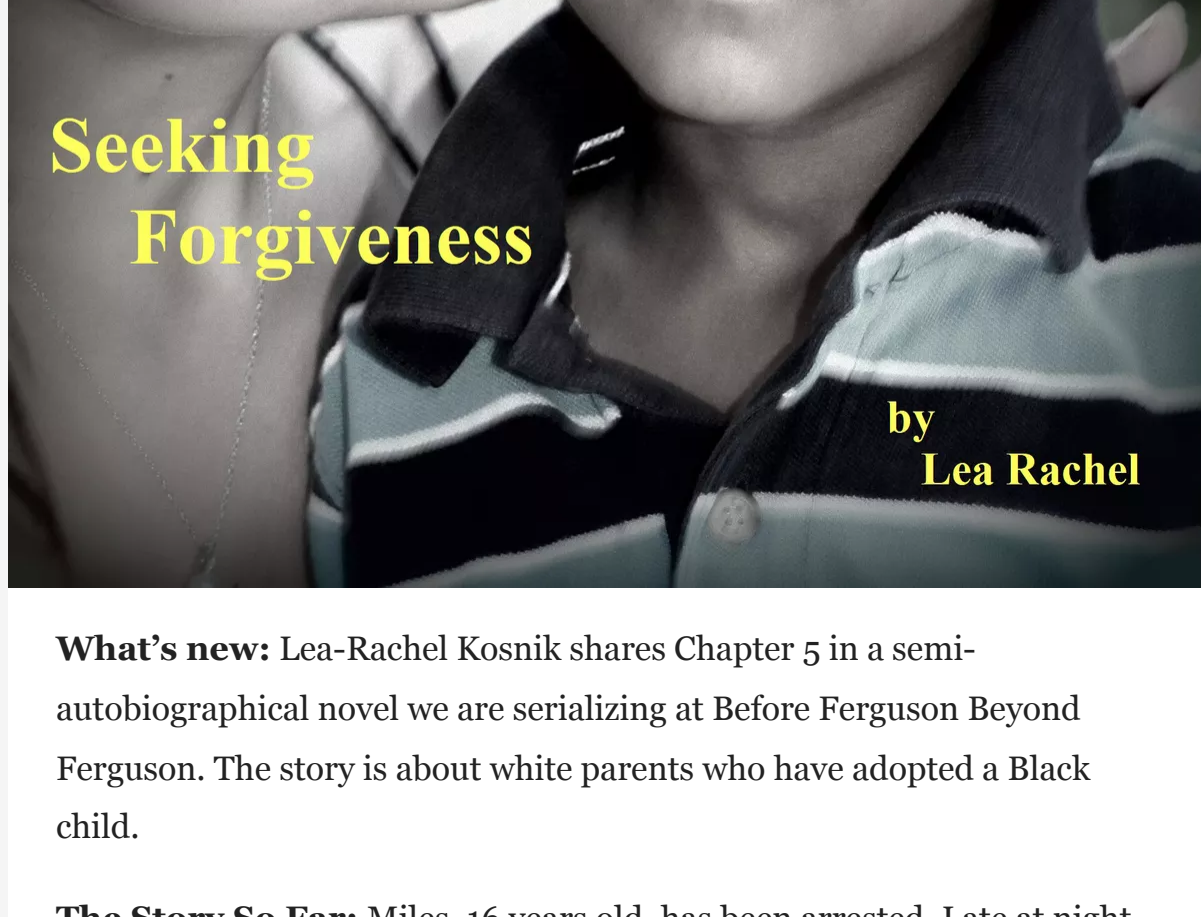
- [Read Valerie Schremp Hahn's story](#) about the statue in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch.
- [Visit the Freedom Suits Facebook Page.](#)

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3. Race Has Become Medical Shorthand for Too Many Caregivers



When Pat Holterman-Hommes read in 2021 that her former colleague, Alphonso Harried, was waiting for a kidney transplant, she wanted to see if she could donate one. (Joe Martinez for Kaiser Health News)

What's New: Scientists widely agree that race is a social construct, yet it is often conflated with biology. This leaves the impression that a person's race governs how the body functions, say reporters **Rae Ellen Bichell** and **Cara Anthony** of Kaiser Health News.

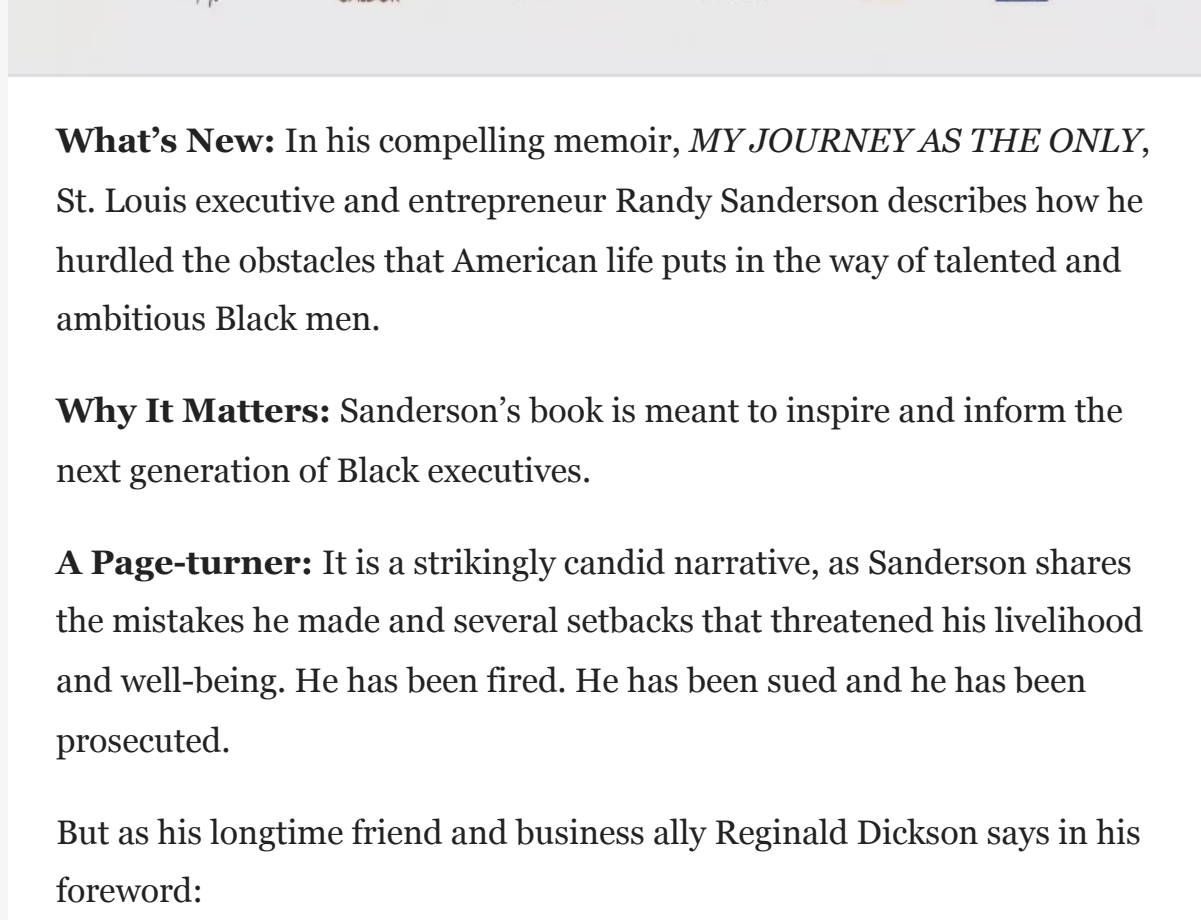
Why It Matters: Race is a useful tool for identifying population-level disparities. Still, experts now say it is not very useful in making decisions about how to treat an individual patient.

“The purpose is one to ignore the social determinants of health — of which race is one. It's not to try to help patients overcome the racial-specific or ethnicity-specific barriers to receiving excellent care.”
 — Dr. Lisa McElroy, a surgeon who performs kidney transplants at Duke University.

What Patients Should Do: Ask, “Is my race being used in my clinical care. Is it affecting my care? And what are my options?”

Go Deeper: [Read the story from Kaiser Health News.](#)

4. The FAM Addresses Housing Inequities



The Turners (Aaron and Joy) were one of the first families to receive support from the FAM, a year-old non-profit. (Photo by Neil E. Das, courtesy of The FAM.)

What's Happening: In its first year, [The FAM](#), a local non-profit with ties to [One Family Church](#), helped 33 Black families become homeowners in the metro area by providing financial aid and additional resources, reports Andrea Smith in the Ladue News.

How It Works: The FAM assists with expenses by covering the down payment, new appliance costs and related expenses.

Why It Matters: The FAM has a mission to “eliminate race as a factor in homeownership throughout St. Louis in one generation.”

“There are other, typically government-run, programs that provide some down-payment assistance. What differentiates The FAM is both in our generosity — the amount of money we gift our families ranges from \$10,000 to \$20,000 — and in the very simple process by which they become our clients. We inquire if they or their ancestors lived in the United States prior to 1968, which was the year the Fair Housing Act [was passed], ... then they, by definition, were living under discriminatory housing laws.”
 — John Kiehl, The FAM's managing director

Go Deeper: [Read Smith's Report in the Ladue News.](#)

5. 'Still Being Processed'

What's new: Lea-Rachel Kosnik shares Chapter 5 in a semi-autobiographical novel we are serializing at Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson. The story is about white parents who have adopted a Black child.

The Story So Far: Miles, 16 years old, has been arrested. Late at night, Rachel drives down to the police lockup in the hope of bringing him home.

In Chapter 5:

Can I see my son yet? The officer at the front desk says, “Still being processed.”
 A simmering rage boiled inside me. What were the magic words to get him to check on my son?

As she waits, Rachel remembers an admonition from a beloved but troubled cousin:

“Should something ever happen to your son, never leave him in jail overnight. Anything could happen to him there. None of it any good.”

Go Deeper: [Find all five chapters here.](#) Note: Each chapter takes less than five minutes to read. You can download and print the chapters as a PDF.

6. THE ONLY Describes A Life Filled With Setbacks And Success

What's New: In his compelling memoir, *MY JOURNEY AS THE ONLY*, St. Louis executive and entrepreneur Randy Sanderson describes how he hurdled the obstacles that American life puts in the way of talented and ambitious Black men.

Why It Matters: Sanderson's book is meant to inspire and inform the next generation of Black executives.

A Page-turner: It is a strikingly candid narrative, as Sanderson shares the mistakes he made and several setbacks that threatened his livelihood and well-being. He has been fired. He has been sued and he has been prosecuted.

But as his longtime friend and business ally Reginald Dickson says in his foreword:

His integrity, intellect, persistence compassion and humility held him in good stead... Randy Sanderson is a role model for us all.

Go deeper:

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