



# STL Equity Matters

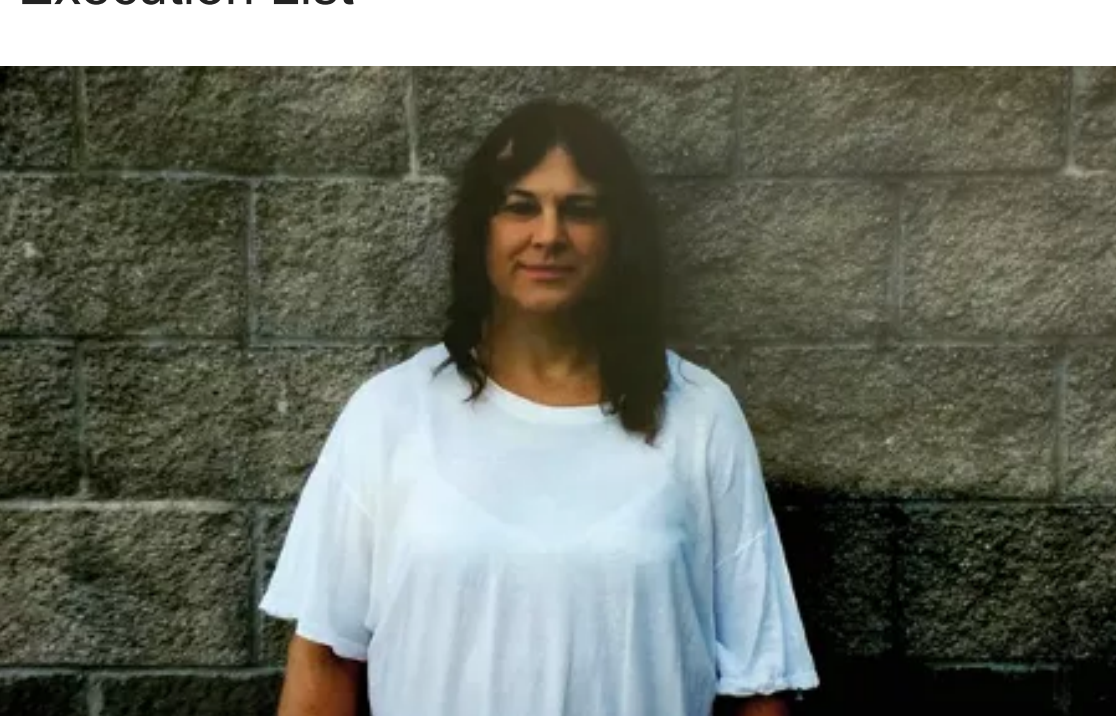
By Erika Whitfield • Jan 02, 2023  
Smart Brevity® count: 4.5 mins... 1212 words

**Happy New Year ... and welcome to the 17th edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters ...**

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

**Who is behind this:** This newsletter is brought to you by the [River City Journalism Fund](#), a non-profit journalism project formerly known as [Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson](#).

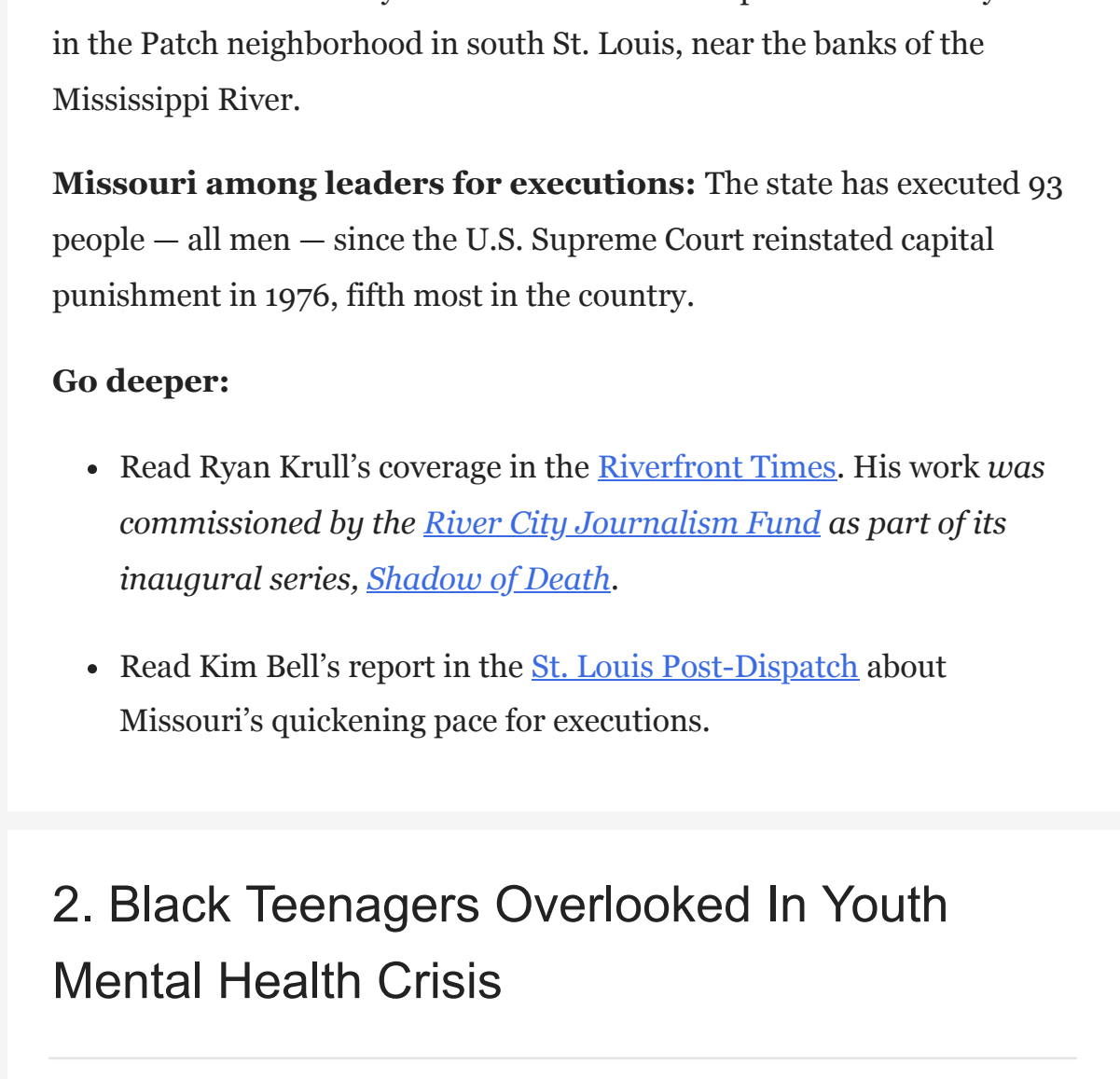
This rebranding and new collaboration brings additional resources and brainpower that will boost reporting on local government, the environment, criminal justice, the arts, the business community and more.



You can learn more by reading this story in the [Gateway Journalism Review](#).

Let's dive in.

## 1. Amber McLaughlin Is Next on Missouri's Execution List



Amber McLaughlin (Photo provided by Jessica Hicklin)

**What's new:** Amber McLaughlin will be the first openly transgender inmate put to death in the U.S. if her execution proceeds as scheduled Tuesday, Jan. 3 at the Eastern Reception, Diagnostic and Correctional Center in Bonne Terre.

**Why it matters:** McLaughlin's attorney has argued that she is "borderline" intellectually disabled. At McLaughlin's trial, no expert testimony had been presented regarding her mental health though the jury had been told it would be critical to her case for a life sentence. The jury deadlocked on the sentence, and Judge Steven H. Goldman took it upon himself to impose the death sentence.

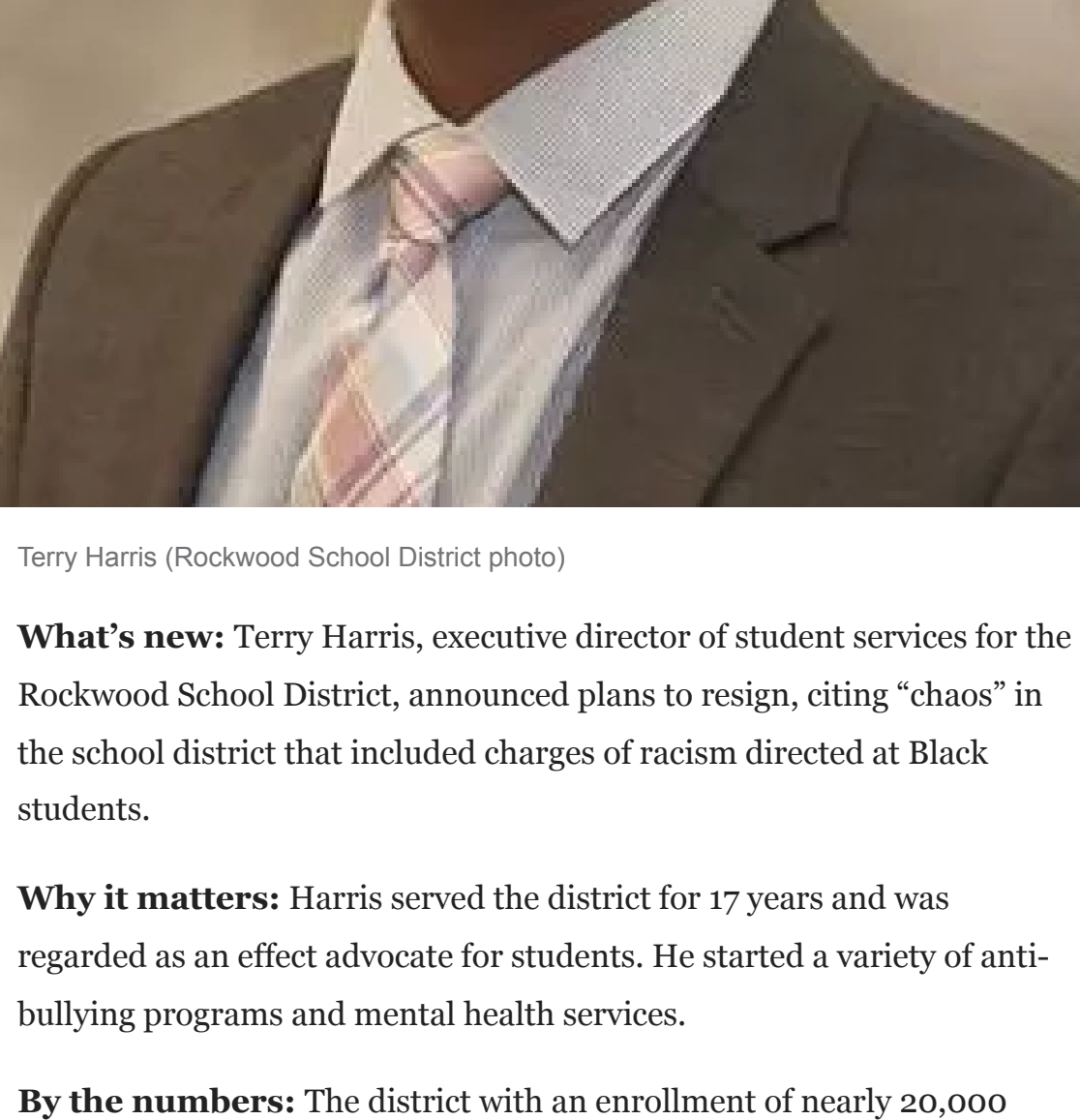
**Background:** On Nov. 20, 2003, McLaughlin, who then identified as Scott McLaughlin, abducted Beverly Guenther outside the office where she worked in Earth City. She was stabbed and raped. Her was body left in the Patch neighborhood in south St. Louis, near the banks of the Mississippi River.

**Missouri among leaders for executions:** The state has executed 93 people — all men — since the U.S. Supreme Court reinstated capital punishment in 1976, fifth most in the country.

**Go deeper:**

- Read Ryan Krull's coverage in the [Riverfront Times](#). His work was commissioned by the [River City Journalism Fund](#) as part of its inaugural series, [Shadow of Death](#).
- Read Kim Bell's report in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) about Missouri's quickening pace for executions.

## 2. Black Teenagers Overlooked In Youth Mental Health Crisis



Dr. Sarah Vinson reviews a case with colleagues at Morehouse School of Medicine in Atlanta, where she is interim chair of psychiatry. See Truofort for The New York Times

**What's new:** In a penetrating and disturbing report, the New York Times notes that teenagers of color are often overlooked as policymakers focus on the adolescent mental health crisis.

**Why it matters:** The disparities are stark, writes the Times reporter, Matt Richtel:

One-fourth of communities in the top 25 percent income bracket in the United States have a practicing mental health specialist. In contrast, among the poorest income quartile, only eight percent of the lowest-income communities have such a practice. Across the country, the burden is often shouldered by school counselors and time-strapped primary-care doctors.

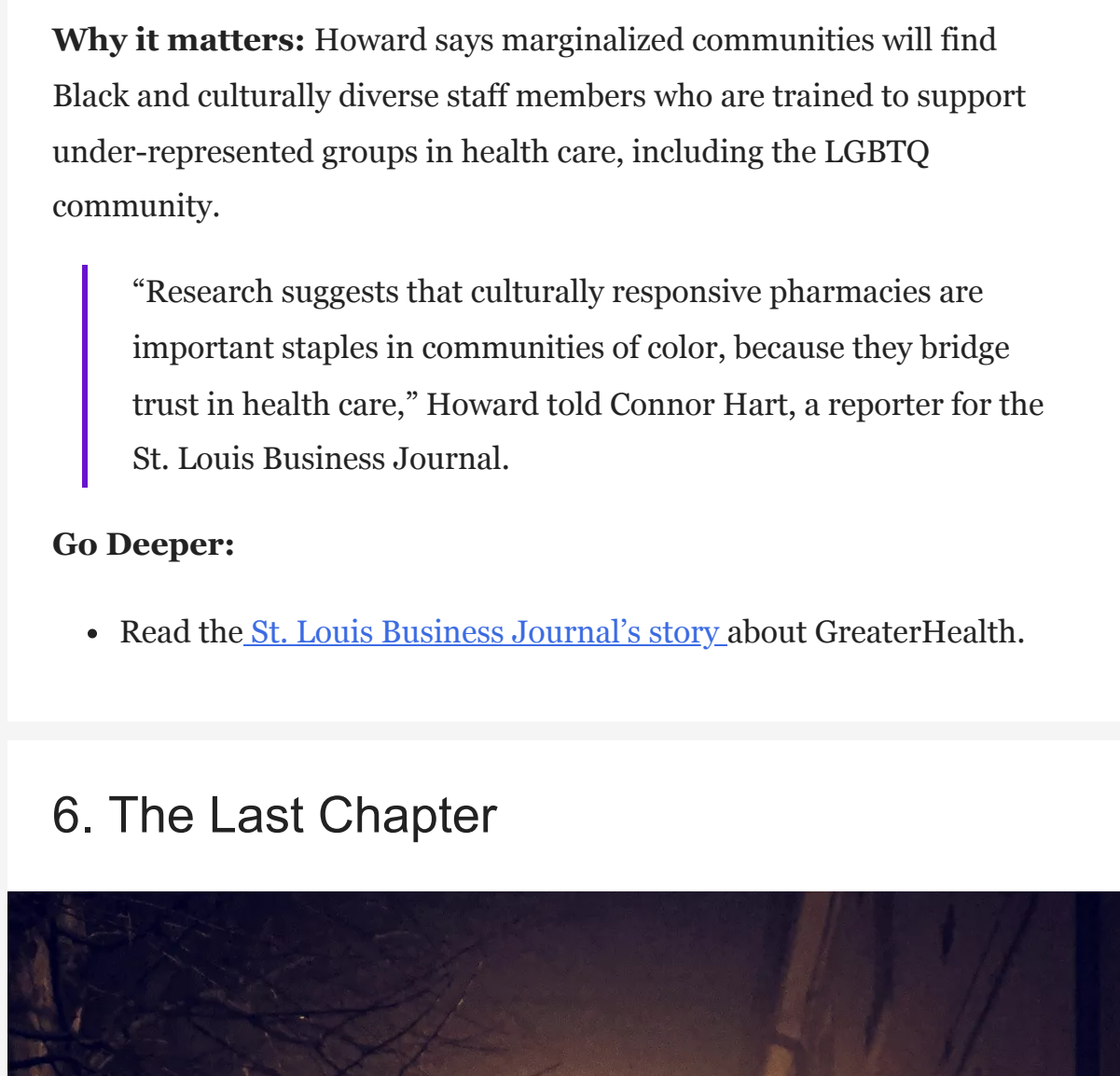
**What's being done:** A team of specialists at [Morehouse School of Medicine](#) is focusing on the needs of low-income children and teenagers of color, providing mental health services that take into account their circumstances that school teachers and guidance counselors overlook. Notably, many students of color are diagnosed with issues based on disruptive behavior rather than internalized disorders such as anxiety and depression.

Locally: [The Sistakeeper Empowerment Center](#), based in Florissant, provides services aimed at helping young women with self-esteem, literacy, and bullying.

Read the full story in the [New York Times](#).

- Subscribe to the New York Times Race Related Newsletter. [Race/Related](#)

## 3. Rockwood Administrator Resigns Amid Charges Of Racism



Terry Harris (Rockwood School District photo)

**What's new:** Terry Harris, executive director of student services for the Rockwood School District, announced plans to resign, citing "chaos" in the school district that included charges of racism directed at Black students.

**Why it matters:** Harris served the district for 17 years and was regarded as an effect advocate for students. He started a variety of anti-bullying programs and mental health services.

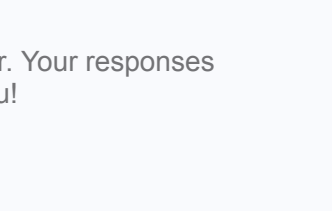
**By the numbers:** The district with an enrollment of nearly 20,000 students is the largest in the region and covers much of west St. Louis County with a racial makeup that is 75% white and 7 % African-American.

"I am leaving so that I can feel safe in my body and in my workplace — mentally and emotionally. I am resigning in order to return to feeling valued as one of the region's most innovative, student-centered educators," Harris wrote in an email to colleagues.

**Go deeper:** Read the report on Harris's resignation from Nassim Benchaabane and Blythe Bernhard in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).

## Now A Word From Our Sponsor

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## 4. St. Louis Loses A Pioneering Advocate For Youth



Demetrious Johnson (Family photo)

**What's new:** Demetrious Johnson, a star defensive back for the University of Missouri and the Detroit Lions, who gained even greater notoriety for his philanthropic work died on Christmas Eve. He was 61.

**Memorial service:** [A service for Johnson will be held](#) at 3 p.m. today at Chaifetz Arena. Click on the link for details.

**His legacy:** Johnson grew up in a city public housing project and went on to play football for Mizzou and the Lions before founding his nonprofit, the Demetrious Johnson Foundation, in 1992. His death comes in the wake of the passing of another youth advocate, [Martin Luther Mathews](#), co-founder of the Mathews-Dickey Boys' and Girls' Club on Nov. 8.

Johnson started youth sports and tutoring programs but may have been best known for his Thanksgiving turkey giveaways and Christmas toy drives. Area coaches, athletes, nonprofit leaders and politicians served as volunteers.

**Learn more about Demetrious Johnson:** Read Nassim Benchaabane's obituary in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).

## 5. New Pharmacy Opens In Delmar Divine



(Photo from GreaterHealth website)

**What's new:** GreaterHealth Pharmacy and Wellness has opened at 5503 Delmar Boulevard at the site of Delmar Divine. Founder Marcus Howard says it is designed to offer "radically inclusive, culturally responsive" health care.

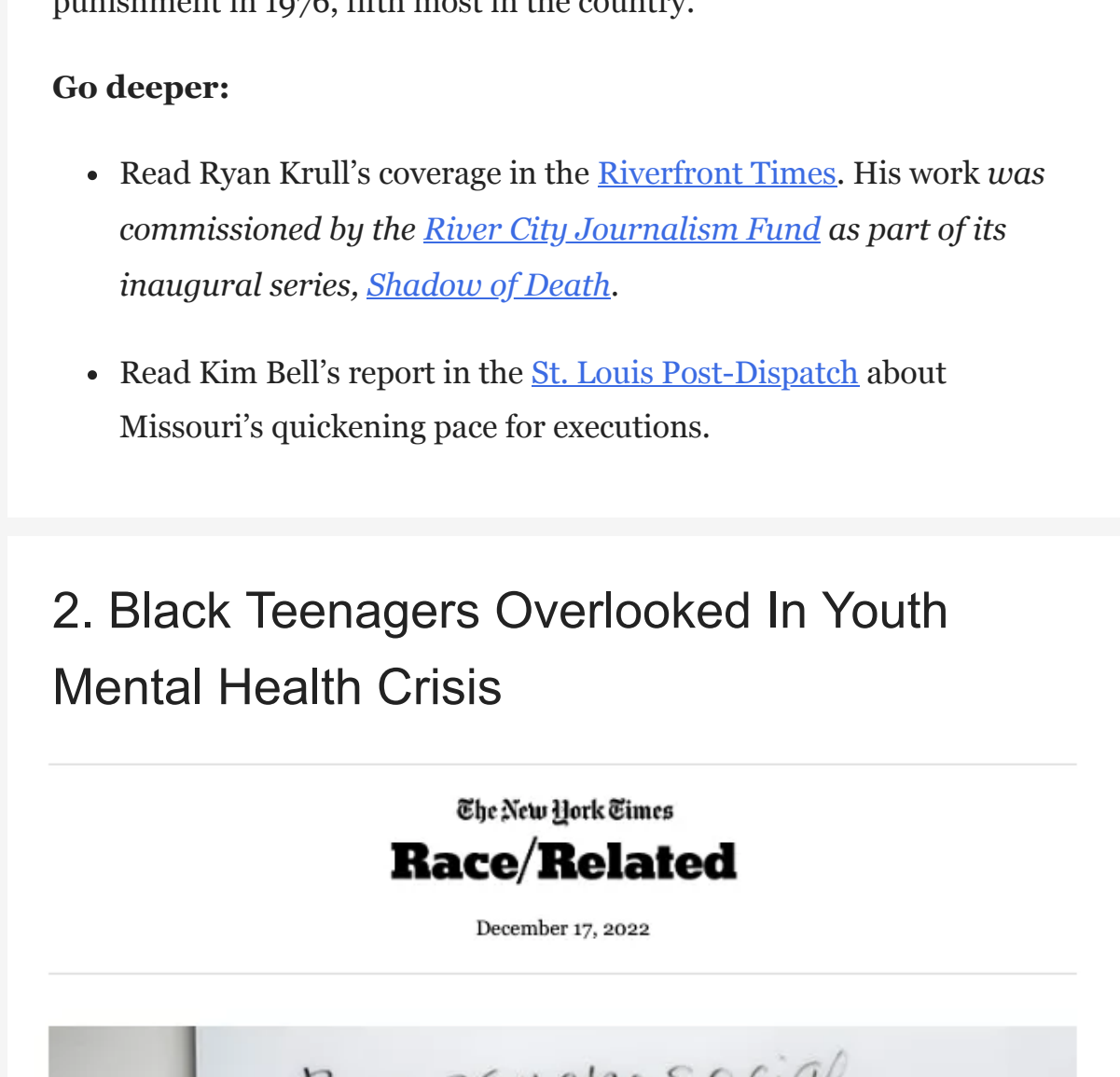
**Why it matters:** Howard says marginalized communities will find Black and culturally diverse staff members who are trained to support under-represented groups in health care, including the LGBTQ community.

"Research suggests that culturally responsive pharmacies are important staples in communities of color, because they bridge trust in health care," Howard told Connor Hart, a reporter for the St. Louis Business Journal.

**Go Deeper:**

- Read the [St. Louis Business Journal's story](#) about GreaterHealth.

## 6. The Last Chapter



LEA RACHEL

**What's New:** Lea-Rachel Kosnik shares the final chapter in a semi-autobiographical novel we have been serializing since last spring. The story is about white parents who have adopted a Black child.

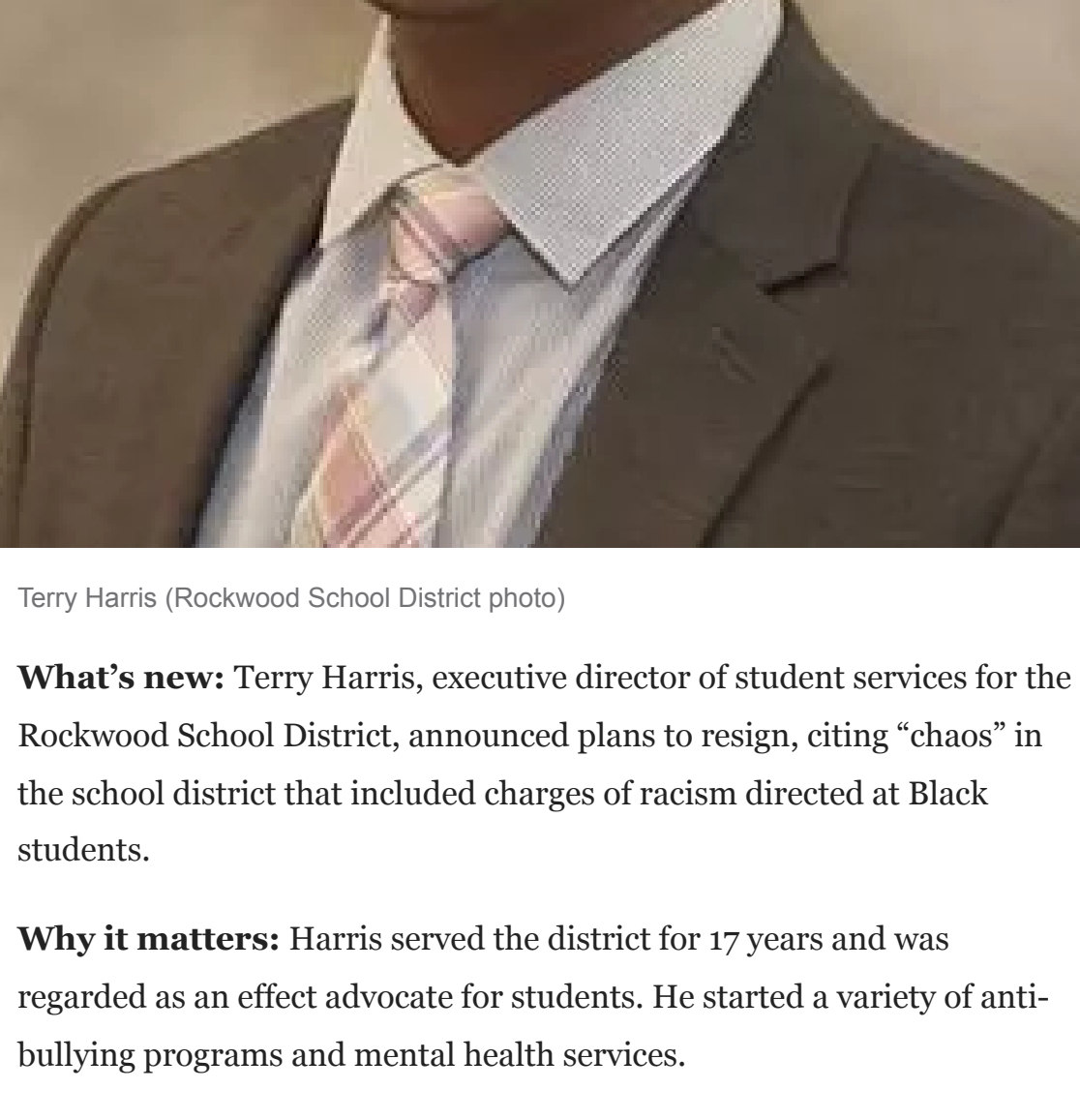
**In Chapter 28:** Rachel has gathered the video evidence she needs to prove that her African-American son Miles is innocent of raping a classmate at a house party. The circumstances were far different than what the police assumed when they arrived at the house. Still, they seem to be hesitating...

"It won't look good to keep an innocent boy locked up much longer," says Miles' attorney.

**Go Deeper:** [Find all 28 chapters here](#). Note: Each chapter takes less than five minutes to read. You can download and print the chapters as a PDF.

**Even Better:** [Buy the book](#).

- Listen to Lea's interview** with KMOX Radio's [Debbie Monterrey](#), who is also an adoptive mother of a Black son.
- Read A Review:** [In the St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#), Dale Singer praises *Seeking Forgiveness* "for the power of its message."



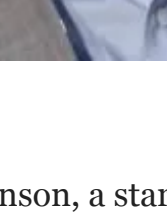
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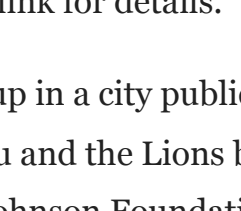
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