

STL Equity Matters

By Erika Whitfield • Dec 30, 2021

Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins...1089 words

Welcome to the special Holiday Letter edition of STL Equity Matters

Here is our third annual holiday letter to friends of the family – the Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson (BFBF) family. Our first letter went to fewer than a hundred. There now are something like a thousand of you who get stories and updates through this Axios newsletter system and our social media channels. Many of you are donors, which we really appreciate. This letter, of course, is meant to encourage you to think about us as you close out the year making donations to worthy organizations.

[Here's how you can donate to BFBF.](#)

But this letter is also meant to let you know what we have accomplished in 2021 and, importantly, how we are thinking about 2022.

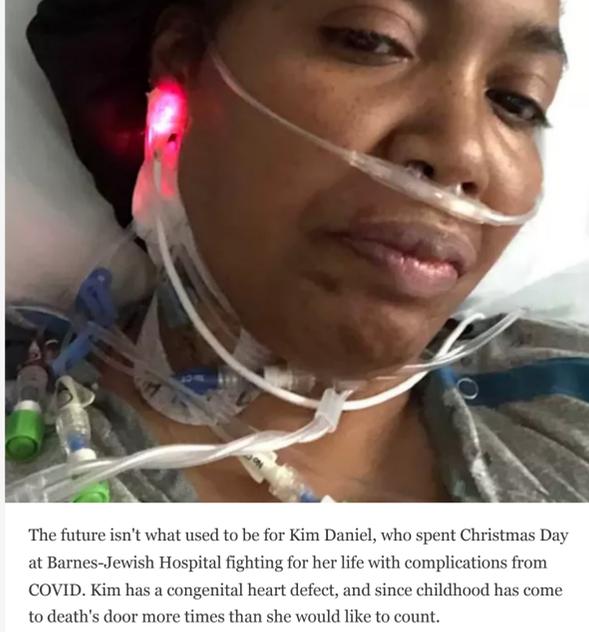
Let's start with a quote from the late, great oracle Yogi Berra:

"The future isn't what it used to be."

Not for us as journalists and storytellers, nor for our partners in St. Louis media, which includes (alphabetically) the Catholic Health Association, KTRS, Riverfront Times, St. Louis American, St. Louis Jewish Light, St. Louis Magazine, St. Louis Post-Dispatch, and St. Louis Public Radio.

Nor for our most vulnerable and marginalized residents, the people about whom we have written dozens of stories this year...

1. Prayers for Kim



The future isn't what used to be for Kim Daniel, who spent Christmas Day at Barnes-Jewish Hospital fighting for her life with complications from COVID. Kim has a congenital heart defect, and since childhood has come to death's door more times than she would like to count.

Her most recent challenge came just as she was seeing hope on the horizon. For many years, Kim had been trying to find a better place to live than her increasingly crime-ridden neighborhood in Preservation Square. Kim's fear and despair peaked this summer when a young man she had grown fond of was murdered barely 100 yards from her apartment. Then just weeks later Kim got an e-mail she had been waiting on for more than a decade. The St. Louis Housing Authority had declared her eligible for a Section 8 voucher. The voucher would provide a subsidy and serve as a time-limited passport for Kim to find a new neighborhood and home.

But the safest communities in St. Louis and St. Louis County have few landlords willing to participate in the Section 8 program. It took months before Kim finally found a nice apartment near Lafayette Square. She was to move in Dec. 10, but fell ill on Nov. 12 and has been hospitalized since Dec. 1.

We will be adding another chapter to Kim's story, soon. Our team members will also be writing more about the families who, like Kim, are part of our 63106 Project. They are the people who live in our region's most vulnerable neighborhoods in the time of COVID. We have been able to produce these stories with a diverse team of reporters, photographers, presentation specialists and data analysts thanks to continuous grants from the Pulitzer Center, and donations ranging from \$5 to \$5000 from people like you.

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- 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...](#)

2. Journalism in jeopardy

The Atlantic



BUSINESS

A SECRETIVE HEDGE FUND IS GUTTING NEWSROOMS

Inside Alden Global Capital

By McKay Coppins

The Atlantic's McKay Coppins

Now turning our attention to THE MEDIA: The future isn't what it used to be for many of us, but perhaps most especially for our friends at the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Lee Enterprises, owner of the Post-Dispatch, was recently the target of a takeover attempt by Alden Global Capital, a company that has been acquiring media companies over the last several years and making draconian cuts. Since acquiring the Post-Dispatch and Pulitzer, Lee has reduced the P-D staff by a lot, but it has retained a corp of quality journalists who do tremendous work. In recent years the paper has won two Pulitzer Prizes. Lee is trying to fend off Alden, and you may have noticed that prices for a subscription and online access have become more dear. Even so, this is a time for you to make a wise investment as a citizen to continue your subscription to your daily metro or to step up and start one. Here's a link to do just that: <https://www.stltoday.com/help/subscriber-services/>

As Bill McClellan put it (and perhaps channeling Yogi): "Without a newspaper, you'll never know what you don't know."

And here's how you can support our other partners:

[Riverfront Times](#)

[St. Louis American](#)

[St. Louis Public Radio](#)

[St. Louis Magazine](#)

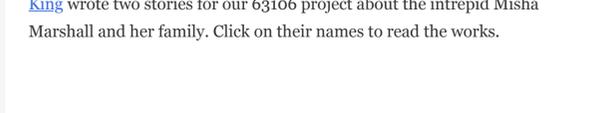
[Pulitzer Center](#)

[St. Louis Press Club](#)

[St. Louis Jewish Light](#)

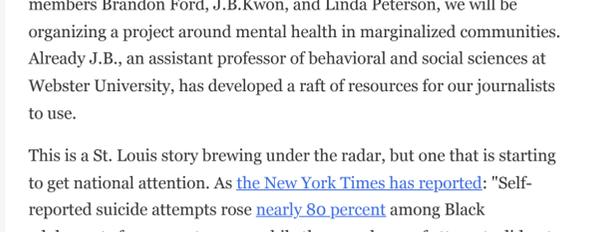
[Catholic Health Association \(Health Progress Magazine\)](#)

3. Youth will be served



Our mission statement calls on us to encourage and train young storytellers of color. We are proud to support (and pay) young writers for their work. [Grace Hu](#) (left) and [Brandon Ford](#) (who is also one of our board members) penned commentary pieces this year, and [Leyla Fern King](#) wrote two stories for our 63106 project about the intrepid Misha Marshall and her family. Click on their names to read the works.

4. When you come to a fork in the road, take it



Looking ahead: With encouragement and support from board members Brandon Ford, J.B.Kwon, and Linda Peterson, we will be organizing a project around mental health in marginalized communities. Already J.B., an assistant professor of behavioral and social sciences at Webster University, has developed a raft of resources for our journalists to use.

This is a St. Louis story brewing under the radar, but one that is starting to get national attention. As [the New York Times has reported](#): "Self-reported suicide attempts rose [nearly 80 percent](#) among Black adolescents from 1991 to 2019, while the prevalence of attempts did not change significantly among those of other races and ethnicities."

More to come through this newsletter: We will continue producing and enhancing our newsletter in 2022, adding more features and making it more frequent. The newsletter, which features the work of educator Erika Whitfield and journalist Sylvester Brown, along with a rotating group of other contributors, provides short takes on social justice issues in our region with links that invite readers to go deeper on topics of their choosing. It is a platform meant to tie together people who have long been involved in racial equity issues and those just getting engaged.

If you have read this far on a holiday week, thank you for your patience and interest.

All the best to you and your family,

Dick Weiss

Executive Editor and Co-Founder

Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson

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