

STL Equity Matters

By Erika Whitfield • Nov 23, 2021

Smart Brevity® count: 4 mins...1030 words

Welcome to the third edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters ([Click here to read volumes 1 & 2](#))

How it works: We are here to shine a light on how race is lived in our region. We look back, we look ahead, and we are very much in the now.

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

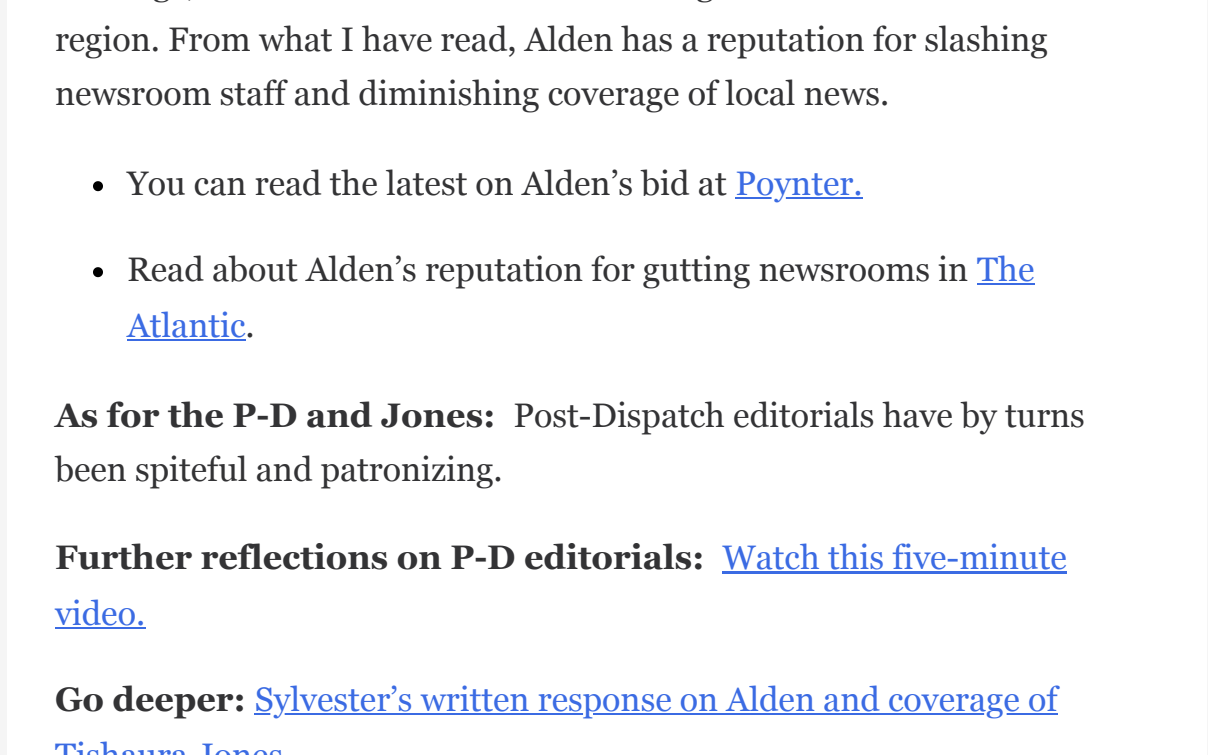
Big Breaking News: Alden Global Capital has Lee Enterprises, publisher of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, in its crosshairs. Our Sylvester Brown weighs in on the implications.

Also:

- Fascinating interview with **Tango Walker-Jackson**, spirited advocate for students of color and their parents.
- **Kirkwood United Methodist Church** hosts forum on what it's like to grow up Black in Kirkwood.
- Teacher-Parent **Erika Whitfield** talks about making space for mistakes.
- Book banning takes on a racial tinge in the region's schools, including **Francis Howell, Lindbergh, Rockwood** and **Wentzville**.

Let's dive in.

1. Ask Syl: The Post-Dispatch in peril



What's Happening: 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: *"I am curious about your thoughts on how the St. Louis Post-Dispatch has covered Mayor Tishaura Jones."*

Syl Responds: Your question is timely concerning the recent news that Alden Capital is making a bid to acquire Lee Enterprises, owner of the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. Though I may be critical of some of the newspaper's coverage, I value the P-D's role in delivering much needed news in our region. From what I have read, Alden has a reputation for slashing newsroom staff and diminishing coverage of local news.

- You can read the latest on Alden's bid at [Poynter](#).
- Read about Alden's reputation for gutting newsrooms in [The Atlantic](#).

As for the P-D and Jones: Post-Dispatch editorials have by turns been spiteful and patronizing.

Further reflections on P-D editorials: [Watch this five-minute video](#).

Go deeper: [Sylvester's written response on Alden and coverage of Tishaura Jones](#).

Send your questions: to Sylvester at sylvesterbj@gmail.com and we promise a thoughtful response that will be shared with the community.

- **Bonus:** If your question is chosen you'll receive a \$25 gift card to Northwest Coffee.

Now A Word From Our Sponsor



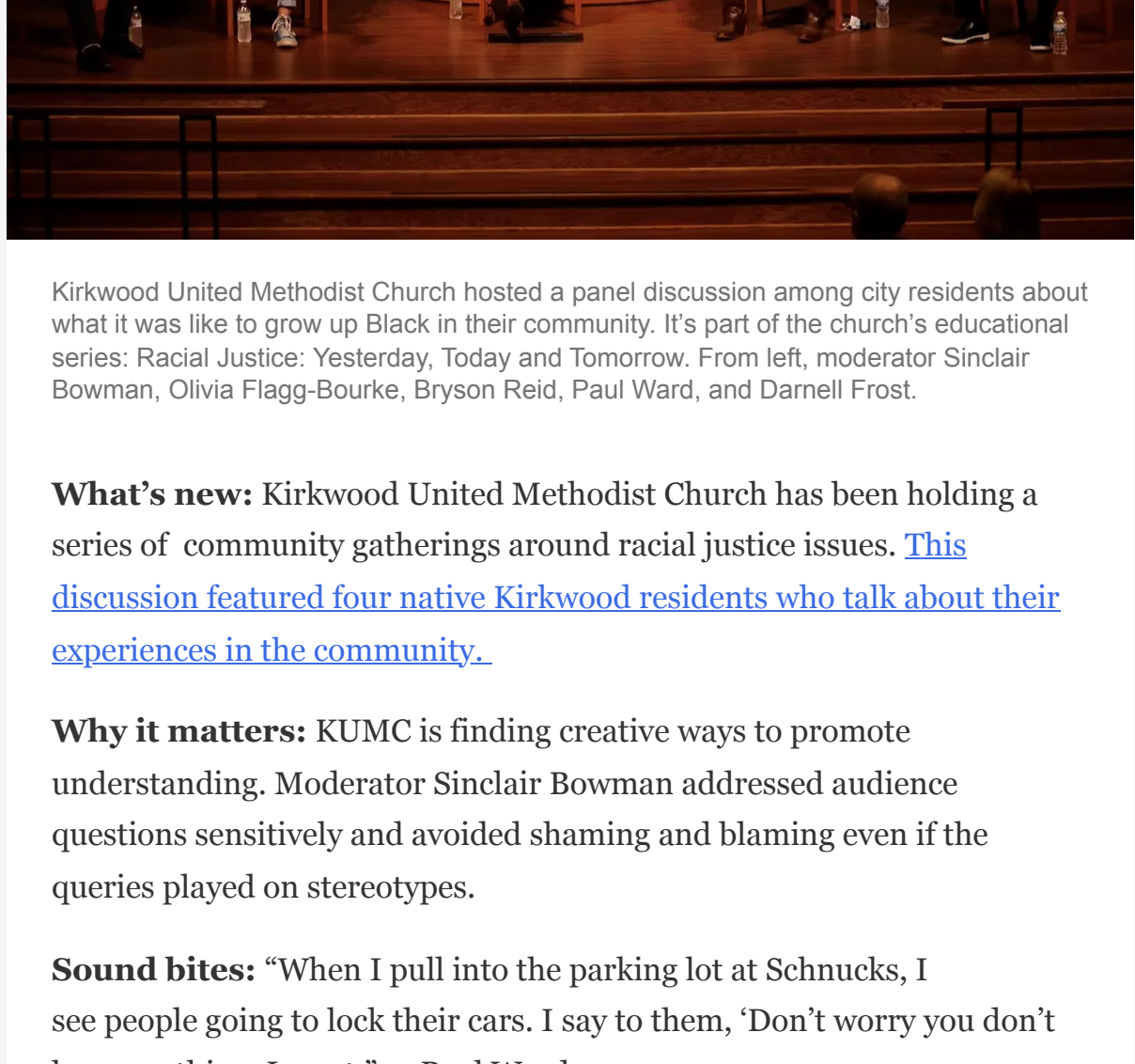
The bottom line: We are the leading local, personal injury attorneys

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, Shevlin, Cook & Jones](#)

2. Tango Walker-Jackson shows up and speaks up



What's happening: Tango Walker-Jackson says "it's easier to dance with the devil than to do the Tango." Walker-Jackson is an outspoken advocate for people of color in our region, especially for students and their parents. She's oft been told by employers she's "not a good fit." This she wears as a badge of honor.

Why it's important: While speaking truth to power, Jackson also provides practical advice to parents in taking on systems that marginalize their children.

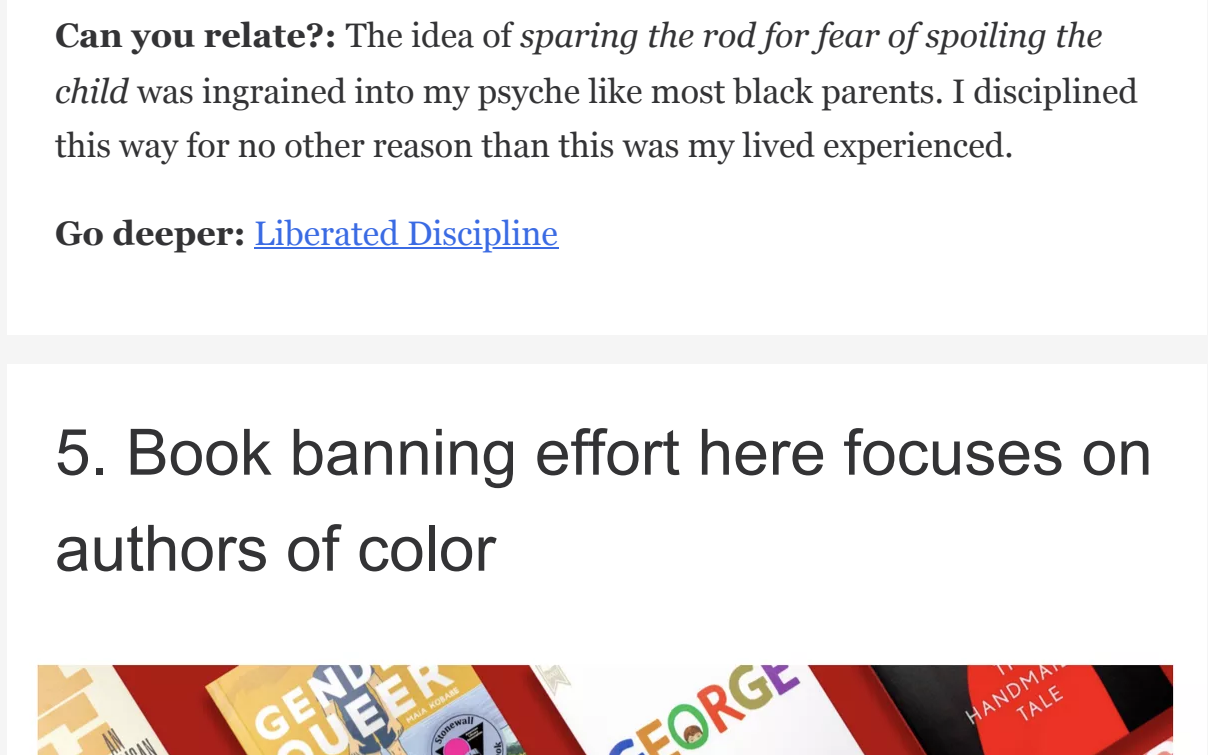
- "Begin to change how you view your own child and the systems that mistreat them."
- "Many parents operate from an oppressed state of mind, accepting the way their children are being treated."
- "Speak up. Be present for you child. Do not listen to those who try to deter you."

Walks the talk: Walker-Jackson advocated for her children as they have fought battles of their own. "My children and friends used to joke that when the school staff saw me coming they would push a red button under the secretary's desk to alert others that I was there."

Her roots: Walker-Jackson comes from a long line of powerful, accomplished family members in business and athletics, who broke barriers. Their journey is poignant and inspirational.

Go deeper: [Read our chat with Walker-Jackson](#).

3. Growing up Black in Kirkwood and beyond



Kirkwood United Methodist Church hosted a panel discussion among city residents about what it was like to grow up Black in their community. It's part of the church's educational series: Racial Justice: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. From left, moderator Sinclair Bowman, Olivia Flagg-Bourke, Bryson Reid, Paul Ward, and Darnell Frost.

What's new: Kirkwood United Methodist Church has been holding a series of community gatherings around racial justice issues. [This discussion featured four native Kirkwood residents who talk about their experiences in the community](#).

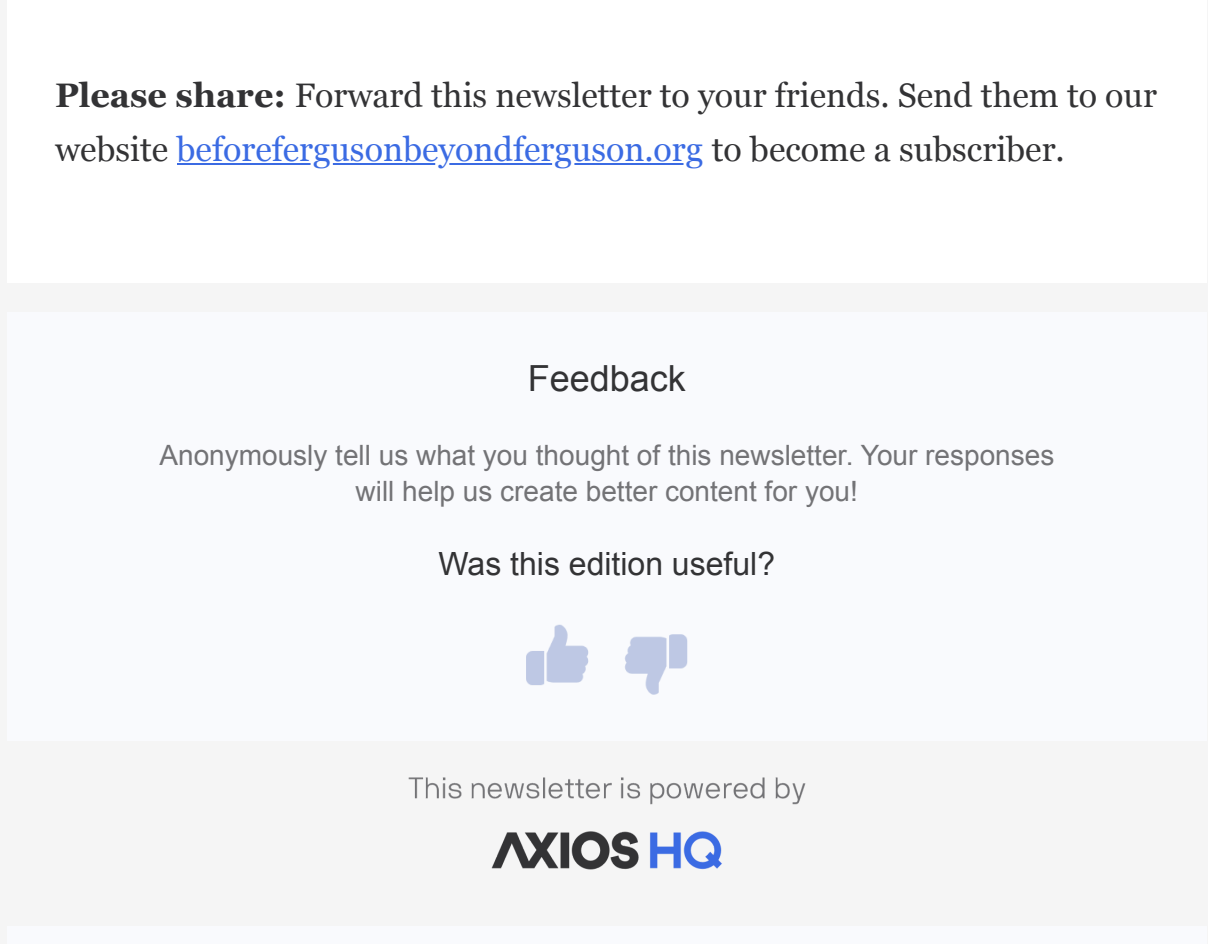
Why it matters: KUMC is finding creative ways to promote understanding. Moderator Sinclair Bowman addressed audience questions sensitively and avoided shaming and blaming even if the queries played on stereotypes.

Sound bites: "When I pull into the parking lot at Schnucks, I see people going to lock their cars. I say to them, 'Don't worry you don't have anything, I want.'" — Paul Ward

"I am the only Black teacher at my Montessori school in Creve Coeur. I tell my students, I love being Black. I love that you are white. It's lovely to be different." — Bryson Reid

Calls to action: KUMC helps congregants walk the talk by setting up community action programs. [Kirkwood UMC | Mission & Vision](#)

4. Liberated discipline: Creating space for our children to make mistakes



By Erika Whitfield

What's happening: This weekend my son lied to me. It was not a huge lie but a lie nonetheless. We keep an old tablet in our kitchen to look up recipes, watch shows, and listen to music while cooking and cleaning. I noticed the tablet was missing.

Why it matters: How my son views himself in our house, as part of our family, and in this world matters to me. The way I choose to respond is super important.

Can you relate?: The idea of *sparing the rod for fear of spoiling the child* was ingrained into my psyche like most black parents. I disciplined this way for no other reason than this was my lived experienced.

Go deeper: [Liberated Discipline](#)

5. Book banning effort here focuses on authors of color

Some of the books that have been challenged by parents at several regional schools are shown in this photo illustration at Left Bank Books in St. Louis' Central West End neighborhood.

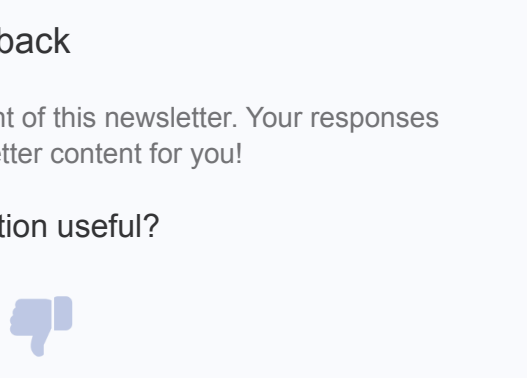
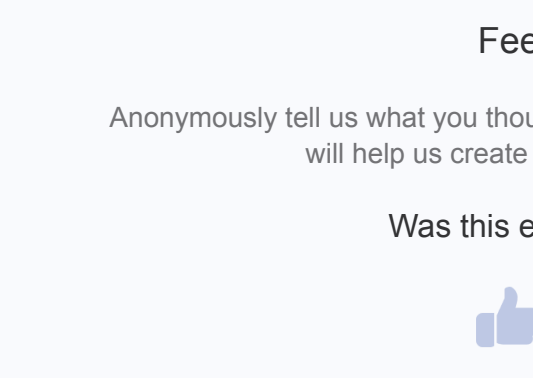
(Screen capture from STLPR website)

What's happening: St. Louis Public Radio reports several area school districts are facing an onslaught from parents and pressure groups to remove books from their libraries. St. Louis Public Radio reports. Wentzville, Rockwood, Lindbergh and Francis Howell are facing formal book challenges.

Why it matters: Reporter Kate Grumke notes that two thirds of the books challenged in the St. Louis area were written by authors of color or those who identify as LGBTQ.

Context: The American Library Association's Office for Intellectual Freedom reports a 60 percent increase in attempts to ban books, compared to this time last year. Book banners say it's not about race, but inappropriate language.

Go deeper: Read Grumke's story at [St. Louis Public Radio](#).



Contributors to this newsletter: [Sylvester Brown](#) (top left) columnist, and [Erika Whitfield](#) (top right) and [Dick Weiss](#), operations. Click on a name to get a bio.

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