



# STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 20th edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters ...

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

**Who is behind this:** This newsletter is brought to you by the [River City Journalism Fund](https://rcjf.org), a nonprofit journalism project formerly known as Before Ferguson Beyond Ferguson. This rebranding and new collaboration bring additional resources and brainpower that will boost reporting on local government, the environment, criminal justice, the arts, the business community, and more.



[rcjf.org](https://rcjf.org)

Local journalism is in crisis. Continuing fallout from the pandemic, the ongoing erosion of print revenue and corporate hedge-fund ownership threaten local newsrooms.

**We believe there is a solution.**

You can learn more by reading this story in the [Gateway Journalism Review](https://gatewayjournalismreview.com).

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Let's dive in ...



Donnybrook moderator Charlie Brennan with Maharat Rori Picker Neiss. (Below) Elliot Laurence.

### 1. "My No. 1 Priority Is to Protect My Child"

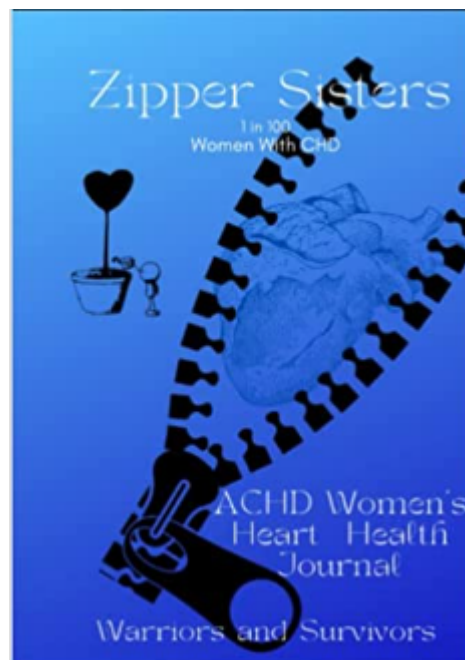
**What's new:** Much has been written and said recently about transgender rights and care. But nowhere will you find a more enlightening and careful interview than on *Donnybrook Next Up*, with Charlie Brennan and Alvin Reid as interlocutors. The two provided context and drew insightful answers from Maharat Rori Picker Neiss, the mother of a transgender son, and Elliot Laurence, a transgender man.

**Why it matters:** The Missouri Legislature is considering dozens of bills that could remove transgender rights. Along with helping her 11-year-old son transition, Picker Neiss has been traveling to Jefferson City frequently to lobby against those bills. "There is an attempt," she said, "to make people in the state think that trans people are something to be afraid of." Passing these bills "is attacking and marginalizing a group of people that, quite honestly, is already an incredibly vulnerable population in our country."

**What it's like to transition:** Laurence transitioned at age 19, after having joined the U.S. Air Force Reserves at 17. He said the military was more accepting toward him than the state of Missouri. "I didn't get a lot of backlash," he said. After going through the process, he said, "It felt like I was finally home in my own body."

**Go deeper:** [Watch Donnybrook Next Up](#) with Eliot Laurence and Maharat Rori Picker Neiss.





Kim Daniel's journal in service to those with congenital heart defects.

## 2. Kim Daniel Debuts a Journal

**What's new:** We have been following the trials and tribulations of Kim Daniel through our [63106 Project](#) since the onset of Covid-19 in 2020. Ever resilient and ambitious, Daniel has published a useful journal for people with congenital heart defects just like her.

**Why it matters:** Since her childhood and to the present day, Daniel has been at death's door as a result of her malady. Add to that the stress of living for many years in an unsafe neighborhood. Last year, Daniel finally qualified for a Section 8 voucher that allowed her to relocate to an apartment in a safer neighborhood near Lafayette Square. But now the landlord is raising the rent, and she will face eviction if she is unable to raise additional dollars to add to the subsidy she receives through Section 8. Her journal is a Hail Mary for herself and a service to others.

### The journal:

"This Journal I dedicate to the little girls who grew into women and are navigating life as an adult with congenital heart defects," Daniel writes.



"Utilizing this Journal will help you stay organized, monitor your health status, and manage your medical care effectively. It can also help you communicate more effectively with your healthcare providers and improve overall health outcomes."

**How you can help:** Click on Daniel's Amazon page for [Zipper Sisters for CHD](#). (Don't be confused by the author name, K Rochelle; it's her nom de plume.) Share the link with others. Cost: \$20.

Daniel also offers a journal for all people with CHD, called [Know Your Heart](#).



### 3. Shameful

**What's new:** A St. Louis tech startup with a once-stellar reputation is helping to monetize some of the nation's most notorious right-wing websites. These sites promote election denial, white supremacy, Christian nationalism, and a panoply of baseless conspiracy theories, according to the Gateway Journalism Review. One example: Rumble.com, which hosts the podcasts of Alex Jones, Steve Bannon, and the outspoken anti-Semite Nicholas Fuentes.

**Why it matters:** Reporter Paul Wagman notes that nearly a year has passed since GJR first reported that LockerDome, a prominent St. Louis tech startup, had morphed into an advertising middleman for websites that spread hate and imperil the foundations of American democracy. Yet, he writes, almost anyone who thinks that exposure might have embarrassed the company enough to lead to a change in strategy might think again. The company continues to work with the same far-right websites and hasn't even received any visible criticism from the mayor's office, business community, or St. Louis' most powerful media outlets. Expressions of dismay or calls for accountability have come only from the margins of power, such as St. Louis Public Radio and the St. Louis American, Wagman writes. (LockerDome changed its name to Decide Technologies in February 2022.)

**Silence may be golden:** The company's top executives and some of its longtime board members – including CEO Gabe Lozano, CFO Mark Lewis, and directors Brian Matthews and Cliff Holekamp – are all high-profile players in the St. Louis entrepreneurial community with equally high media profiles. But they and the company have maintained a strict no-comment policy in connection with the accusations – hoping, perhaps, that a heads-down policy is the safest. So far the strategy seems to have worked. Some of the figures they currently or previously monetized – such as Jones and St. Louis' own Gateway Pundit – are facing potentially ruinous defamation charges in court. But Decide skates on.

**Adds Wagman:**



"Perhaps most important in understanding the situation is this: Decide exists to make money. And as long as what it is doing is legal – which it is – then more or all of those concerned with it are not going to make a fuss."

**Go deeper:** Read Wagman's reporting in the [Gateway Journalism Review](#). Wagman is a former St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter and FleishmanHillard executive who is now an independent reporter and communications consultant.

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Miguel Perez, 17, and Julian Trejo, 18, are leading parallel lives as professionals in soccer.

#### 4. Two Teens Make Professional Debut as Soccer Excitement Peaks

**What's new:** Meet Miguel Perez, City SC's youngest player and Pattonville High School student. And meet Julian Trejo, the River City Journalism Fund's inaugural journalism fellow and a freshman at Washington University. Both earned their first professional paychecks with the start of the MSL season. And on Friday, Trejo's story about Perez appeared on St. Louis Public Radio's website, along with his interview with talk-show host Elaine Cha of *St. Louis on the Air*.

**Why it matters:** Both these young men faced considerable obstacles in pursuing their dreams. Just a few years ago, Perez, now 17, was told he would be warming the bench for an elite amateur program. He decided to play for a team in a lesser league to get more playing time and experience. Trejo, 18, grew up in impoverished



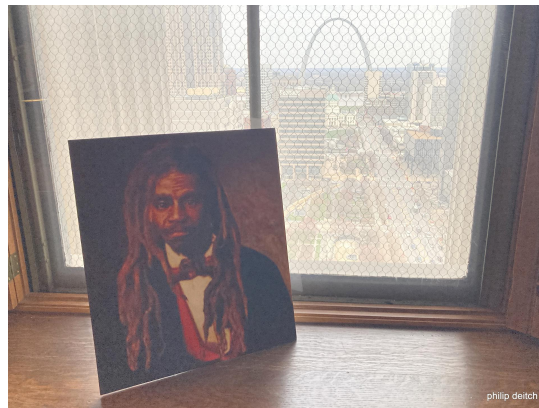
circumstances in Arkansas and attended a high school where few students went on to college. Even so, he won a scholarship to attend Washington University.

**Their work so far:** Though he has yet to score a goal, midfielder Perez has seen a lot of action on the pitch, including a starting assignment Saturday against the Seattle Sounders, one of the league's top teams. Trejo starting with no experience as a journalist but with a strong background as a high-school-champion soccer goalie, already has seen his stories and analysis appear in the [Riverfront Times](#) and [St. Louis American](#), as well as [STLPR](#).

**The response:** "Some players dream a little bit and start getting sidetracked," said City SC coach Bradley Carnell. "But I think Miggy Perez is not that character. I don't think he's the one to dream and start floating around and think he's arrived. He seems to be a guy with a lot of sensible maturity."

As for Trejo: "I have never seen a young writer improve so quickly from one story to the next," said Richard Weiss, RCJF's chair and Trejo's writing coach. "I have learned so much from him about soccer culture, strategy, and tactics, but also about passion, perseverance, and integrity in living a life."

**Go deeper:** Read more about Miguel Perez and his family. Listen to Julian Trejo describe his introduction to journalism and how he landed an interview with Perez and his family. [STLPR: St. Louis on the Air](#).



One of the depictions of Dred Scott. Photo by Philip Deitch.

## 5. Still Time to See *The Many Faces of Dred Scott*

**What's new:** *The Many Faces of Dred Scott*, an exhibition described as "fun, thoughtful, historical, original, and surprising," has been extended through Monday, April 17. The collection was created under the auspices of Lynne M. Jackson, president and founder of the Dred Scott Heritage Foundation. Jackson is the great-great granddaughter of Dred and Harriet Scott.

**The history:** In 1846, [Dred Scott](#) sued for his and his wife's freedom. His claim should have had merit even then, as the two had been held as slaves in free states. The trials, including a Missouri Supreme Court hearing, were held in the Old Courthouse downtown. The case was ultimately decided in 1857 by the U.S. Supreme Court in [Dred Scott v. Sandford](#), which ruled against the Scotts, saying they did not have grounds as citizens to sue.



**Sponsoring the exhibition:** The Law Library of St. Louis is hosting the exhibition, and sponsors include the Mound City Bar Association, Legal Services of Eastern Missouri, and Cultural Leadership. The Law Library is on the 13th floor of the Civil Courts Building in an ornate setting. From one of the windows, you can get a bird's-eye view of the Old Courthouse.

**Go Deeper:** For more details, [visit the Law Library's website](#). Read this [New Yorker story](#) on the importance of learning about Dred Scott.



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