



STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 22nd 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](#), 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.

RC JF RIVER CITY JOURNALISM FUND [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.

The banner features the River City Journalism Fund logo and website URL on the left, a paragraph of text in the middle, and a bold statement at the bottom, all set against a solid red background.

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

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Let's dive in ...



This street scene circa 2008 shows a section of Dr. Martin Luther King Drive west of Kingshighway that got new streetlights and sidewalks with an investment of city funds. St. Louis Post-Dispatch photo by Robert Cohen.

1. North St. Louis Still Awaiting an Infusion of Funds

What's new: St. Louis Post-Dispatch reporter Jacob Barker writes that North City businesses and nonprofits have yet to receive even a nickel from a \$37 million Covid-related relief program despite having more than 100 applications.

Why it matters: The city must distribute the money by the end of next year, but the disbursement plan needs a legislative fix.

So what's the hangup? Barker writes:

"The North St. Louis Commercial Corridor Grant program, as it's called, was billed as a way to support businesses along the main thoroughfares of north city such as Natural Bridge, West Florissant and Dr. Martin Luther King Drive. It was the subject of one of the first political battles of Mayor Tishaura O. Jones' administration as she cast doubt on the legality of the idea being pushed by her chief rival at the time, former Board of Aldermen President Lewis Reed.

"And when leaders finally hashed out a compromise, it drew renewed scrutiny after Reed, its chief architect, was indicted along with two aldermen whose wards would have drawn much of the funding. They pleaded guilty to accepting bribes in exchange for official letters of support for tax incentives."

A possible solution: New legislation would remove the requirement that an applicant be located along one of 10 main streets in north St. Louis, as well as the pots of money allocated to each. A scoring system would give extra points to businesses located on those streets, and limit any alderman's influence over the outcome.

Go deeper: Read Barker's story in the [Post-Dispatch](#).



Precious Barry aims to go into law, journalism and politics. Screen capture from KSDK video.



Zoey Hall sees her future in maternal healthcare. Screen capture from KMOV video.

2. Top Grads

What's new: Precious Barry from the Riverview Gardens School District and Zoey Hall from Clayton each graduated last month with more than \$1 million in merit-based scholarship offers. Barry will be attending Washington University, and Hall will go to Howard University.

Why it matters: Celebrated as role models at their schools, Hall and Barry each say they want to be catalysts for change in their respective fields. Barry envisions going on to law school, becoming a journalist, and running for office. Hall will study computer science with an eye toward supporting Black maternal health.

Barry says: "I had a triple handicap: Black, young, and female. (But) I can do anything if I put my mind to it."

Hall says: "Women are three times more likely to die during childbirth. To know that there's something I can do that's really impacting not just me but my entire community is really powerful."

Go deeper:

- Watch [KSDK feature](#) about Precious Barry.
- Watch [KMOV feature](#) about Zoey Hall.



When you've had enough of

Elders locked behind barred windows
Parents grieving murdered children
Lack of opportunity
Reckless Driving
Over policing
Gun Violence

Join us at
**Harris-Stowe
State University**
June 3rd
10 - 2

Christi Griffin has organized an event aimed at informing St. Louisans about public-safety issues in St. Louis.



3. The Queen of Convening

What's new: Christi Griffin, founder of the Ethics Project, is hosting a symposium addressing the state of public safety in St. Louis. She is bringing together legislators, stakeholders and experts involved in public safety, health, and education.

Why it matters: [Griffin](#) has long been engaged with public-policy matters in the region and regularly holds sessions attracting a wide array of civic leaders and grassroots organizers. Her events are a great way to jump out of whatever silo you might inhabit and get fresh perspectives.

"This summit aims to empower attendees to make a real difference in our community and address the root causes of crime effectively," Griffin says.

When: 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, June 3

Where: Harris-Stowe State University

[Click here for the program booklet.](#)

[Click here for free registration.](#)

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Evie Hemphill with St. Louis BWorks Earn-a-Bike graduates at Patrick Henry Downtown Academy Elementary School. Photo provided by Hemphill.

4. License to Kill

What's new: Evie Hemphill asked St. Louis civic leaders to commit to getting around town without a car for *one single day* and sharing their experience with others as a means of thinking about "traffic violence and the rights of children, and all people to move around safely in their community."

Why it matters: Hemphill's challenge came at a time when injuries and deaths to bikers and pedestrians were increasing.

"During the week of my 40th birthday in March, this sobering reality was on my mind even more than usual. I had the day off from work, and I had some fun plans in place. But as it approached, my heart was with [Janae Edmondson](#), who had just had both of her legs amputated after she came to St. Louis to compete in a volleyball tournament and dared to take a walk with her family downtown.

"My heart was also with my co-worker's wife, [Heyxel Jenkins](#), a new American whose life was dramatically changed this past fall after getting hit by a driver while bicycling home from work. She spent nearly a week in the hospital with a crushed ankle and broken pelvis.

"I was thinking about a young graduate of the [Earn-A-Bike program at my employer, the nonprofit St. Louis BWorks](#), a child left on the side of the road to fend for himself after being hit by a driver while bicycling in a crosswalk. This 13-year-old was hit, and then abandoned, by a so-called adult with a license — apparently a license to do whatever the heck he wants, with impunity."

Results: Hemphill said she [heard from 16 area leaders](#) (and eventually four others who reached out to her unprompted), "which was mildly encouraging early on. But in the end? Only nine of nearly 50 area leaders made good on the challenge, even though they had a solid four weeks to get it done. *Nine*. At a time when this violent crisis could not be more pressing."

Go deeper: Read Hemphill's account in the [Riverfront Times](#).



The symposium will include a 30-minute excerpt from the play *An Amazing Story: German Abolitionists of Missouri*.

5. A Juneteenth Celebration Like None Other

What's new: Hannibal residents will celebrate Juneteenth with an event that marks the shared history of German-born abolitionists and African-Americans.

Why it matters: You might think that outstate Missouri, with a largely white, conservative population, would provide an unusual setting for a Juneteenth



6. Deaconess Pioneers "Liberatory Consciousness"

What's new: The Deaconess Foundation, a well-resourced nonprofit ministry of the United Church of Christ, is launching an Institute for Black Liberation aimed at "healing the hurts" stemming from structural racism.

Why it matters: Over the last 25 years, the Deaconess Foundation has invested more than \$85 million to improve health outcomes in the region. This new initiative will invite participants to take part in "a process of self-discovery, reflection, intensive training ... and building power through collective development of leadership skills and kinship with others, and developing tools to sustain change through generations."

How it works: The inaugural cohort will meet both in-person and virtually over the course of nine to 12 months, including facilitated all-day in-person immersion

celebration that asks people to reflect on the legacy of slavery and to think about addressing systemic racism. But organizer Cecilia Nadal says she has found common ground with many in rural areas and smaller towns who take pride in what their ancestors accomplished in the Civil War era in opposing slavery.

Nadal, who is an African-American author, playwright, and sociologist, said she became intrigued when she learned about the German abolitionist movement, which was particularly active in Hermann, Mo.

"I found myself on Highway 100 driving by myself to Hermann for the first time and I thought, 'What am I doing?' You know, I felt like a fish out of water. I had a lot of preconceived notions about outstate Missouri, without a doubt. And it was the history that pulled me in.... We have an urban-rural conflict that we've got to try and change."

The Event: The Huck Finn Freedom Center and the Deutschheim Verein present "Symposium on the Shared History of Germans and African Americans"

When: 1-4 p.m. Saturday, June 10

Where: Roland Arts Center at Hannibal LaGrange University

Festivities: A public reception will precede the symposium at 1 p.m. with a taste of

sessions, ongoing monthly two-hour virtual group sessions, and individual coaching.

Go deeper: The application deadline for the inaugural cohort is Monday, June 26. Applications are open to Black people, including people of African heritage, located within the metropolitan St. Louis region, with a special emphasis on St. Louis City and St. Louis County, Mo., and East St. Louis, Ill. Apply at deaconess.org/institute



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African American and German appetizers. The Good Hope Church Praise Singers will perform, and a troupe will present a 30-minute excerpt from the play *An Amazing Story: German Abolitionists of Missouri*.

Go deeper: [Learn more about the event and how you can participate.](#)

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