



# STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 24th edition of our newsletter: STL Equity Matters ...

**How It Works:** We shine a light on how race, ethnicity, religion, 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 a red background with white text and a logo. The logo consists of a square with 'RC' and 'JF' stacked vertically, followed by the text 'RIVER CITY JOURNALISM FUND'. The website address 'rcjf.org' is in the top right corner. The main text is centered and reads: 'Local journalism is in crisis. Continuing fallout from the pandemic, the ongoing erosion of print revenue and corporate hedge-fund ownership threaten local newsrooms.' Below this is the bolded statement 'We believe there is a solution.'

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

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Let's dive in ...



Julian Trejo with his father, Omar Frias. (Photo provided by Julian Trejo.)

### **1. My Dad, My Name, Myself**

**What's New:** "There's a secret no one knew about me growing up," Julian Trejo writes. "But now, as a Washington University sophomore, I'm ready to share my story with the world."

**Why It Matters:** Trejo, the inaugural fellow at the River City Journalism Fund, grew up in impoverished circumstances in Springdale, Ark. He also lived with the shame he felt over having his dad serving years in prison throughout his childhood. At age 15, Julian decided to change his name.

*"I am sharing my story because I know there are so many young people like me with parents in prison. I believe many feel ashamed or embarrassed by this fact, and consider the sins of their parents to be their own. I want them to know they are not alone."*

**What's Next:** Julian's father will soon be released from prison. Now, at age 19, "I must decide how he will fit into my life and how I can walk in the world with him in a way that benefits not just the two of us, but our family and community."

**Go Deeper:** Read Julian's story in the [Riverfront Times](#).



The Pruitt-Igoe buildings were brought down in a series of implosions in 1972.  
(St. Louis Post-Dispatch photo.)

## 2. Former Pruitt-Igoe Families Left Out

**What's New:** As citizens and activists sound the alarm about radioactive sites in North St. Louis County and officeholders on both sides of the aisle respond with calls for action, former residents of the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex are asking: What about us?

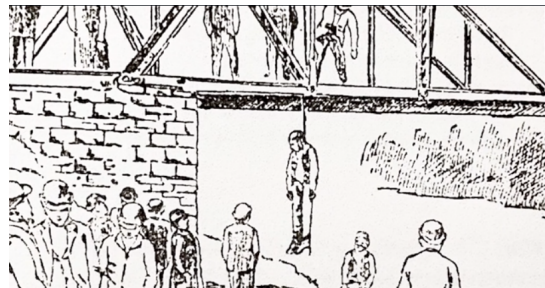
**Why It Matters:** In the early 1950s, Army contract workers sprayed zinc cadmium sulfide, a potential carcinogen, into the air surrounding Pruitt-Igoe and other places in St. Louis. It was part of a Cold War-era military experiment. But it wasn't until 1994 that residents and City Hall learned what the workers were up to. Since then, residents say they have lost many family members to cancer.

"Nearly every funeral I had gone to was a cancerous death," said Ben Phillips, a former Pruitt-Igoe resident.

**Nothing Happened:** Despite calls from St. Louis' congressional delegation for full disclosure, the Army did little to address the issue. A judge dismissed a class-action lawsuit on behalf of the residents.

**Renewed Hope:** This summer, new reporting on St. Louis' nuclear legacy from the Manhattan Project spurred U.S. Sens. Josh Hawley and Eric Schmitt, both Republicans, and U.S. Rep. Cori Bush, D-St. Louis, to call on Congress to make people in designated ZIP codes eligible for federal compensation. These include communities in North St. Louis County, but not the Pruitt-Igoe site. Even so, Hawley has agreed to have an aide take a meeting with the former residents where they can make their case.

**Go Deeper:** Read Richard H. Weiss' story commissioned by the River City Journalism Fund and published in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#). The Associated Press followed this story [with its own report](#), making it a national concern.



John Buckner, a 24-year-old Black man, was hanged from a bridge near Valley Park.

### 3. Valley Park Says No to Lynching Memorial

**What's New:** A coalition of historians and activists wants to erect a plaque memorializing the location of a lynching in 1894. But the City of Valley Park won't let them.

In the early hours of Jan. 17, 1894, a mob lynched a 24-year-old Black man named John Buckner hours after he'd been accused of raping a Black woman and attempting to rape a white woman. Buckner was hanged from a bridge that spanned a stretch of the Meramec River just south of the historic town of Valley Park.

**Why It Matters:** The group, known as the [Reparative Justice Coalition of St. Louis](#), says it has historical documents that tie the lynching to Valley Park by name. They say the city is standing in the way of their effort to educate people about lynchings that were endemic in the post-Civil War era and to promote dialogue about racial inequities.

"We think that this commemorative work is part of a reparative process that helps our community heal from this historical trauma and create a new legacy out of that process of reflection and healing," said Geoff Ward, professor of African and African American Studies at Washington University.

**Valley Park Says Not Here:** “This has nothing to do with opposing the historical marker or the goal behind it. What it has to do with is accuracy,” Tim Engelmeyer, the city attorney, told the St. Louis Post-Dispatch. “The reason why it was denied was they’re wanting to put a marker in a spot where it didn’t even occur.”

**Go Deeper:** Learn more about the dispute in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).



If permitted, a lynching memorial marker would be seen by bikers and hikers using the Meramec Greenway. (Screen capture from video prepared by Allie Schallert for the Reparative Justice Coalition.)

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# Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

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### 4. St. Louis American Rolls Out Special DEI Section

**What's New:** It's tough to stay on top of all the work being done in the region when it comes to diversity, equity, and inclusion, but the St. Louis American put a lot of it together in special section in August.

**Why It Matters:** With political candidates taking potshots at "wokeness" and the courts ruling against affirmative action and other measures aimed at equal opportunity, it's important to learn how inclusion can benefit everyone, especially in the workplace.

**Key Interviews:** You'll find interviews with Dwayne Proctor, president and CEO of the Missouri Foundation for Health; Jason Hall, CEO of Greater St. Louis, Inc.; and Pat Coleman, Alberici's vice president of DEI.

**Go Deeper:** [Review the entire section here.](#)



Carol Daniel is joining Nine PBS.  
(Photo by Sophia Joel.)

## 5. You Can Watch Carol Daniel on Nine

**What's New:** Carol Daniel, a longtime host at KMOX Radio, has joined Nine PBS as a senior producer and host.

**Why It Matters:** "With a long and lauded career, Carol Daniel is a true St. Louis media icon, trusted to bring this community stories that matter," said Amy Shaw, president and CEO of Nine PBS. "Her reputation for informing and inspiring through her work is well known, and she is committed to Nine PBS's role in helping our community thrive."

**What She's Up To:** Daniel will create and host a podcast, highlighting topics and people who are making an impact in the St. Louis region. She will also produce interviews and stories that celebrate and showcase underrepresented voices for



Annissa McCaskill is new executive director of Forward Through Ferguson.

## 6. Forward Through Ferguson Names New Leader

**What's New:** Annissa McCaskill will take the helm as Forward Through Ferguson's new executive director in October.

**Why It Matters:** Forward Through Ferguson is a nonprofit established to encourage and implement advances in racial equity as outlined in the [Ferguson Commission Report](#) issued in 2015.

**Experienced:** McCaskill has worked in the municipal government and nonprofit sectors for more than 25 years. Most recently, McCaskill served as the executive director at Dutchtown South Community

Nine PBS's content flagship, *Living St. Louis*.

"I want to uncover stories, answer difficult questions, introduce you to the people who are doing the hard work of helping this community grow," Daniel said.

**Go Deeper:** Read [the announcement from Nine PBS](#), which includes more on Daniel's storied history in St. Louis media.

Corporation, where she led the organization's efforts to advance neighborhood vitality and racial equity through housing stabilization and real-estate development. She has served on the Mid-America Workforce Investment board, the YWCA Head Start board, and the board of directors for Catholic Urban Programs.

"Annissa has a proven track record of success in leading nonprofit and governmental organizations, and she is deeply committed to the St. Louis community," said Elise Miller Hoffman, Forward Through Ferguson Board Co-Chair. "I know that she will be a powerful voice in our community, and I look forward to working with her to make our region a place in which all St. Louisans can thrive."



Keisha Scarlett, St. Louis Public Schools superintendent, began her job on July 1. In a Sept. 15 letter to City Treasurer Adam Layne,

Scarlett outlined a series of concerns about the district's partnership with the Treasurer's Office as it relates to the College Kids program.

## **7. Follow-Up on College Kids**

**What's New:** As mentioned in a previous newsletter, the River City Journalism Fund commissioned a story from reporter Mike Fitzgerald on the College Kids program that raised questions about its effectiveness. Now the St. Louis Public Schools, under the guidance of new superintendent Keisha Scarlett, wants some answers.

**Why It Matters:** The school district is freezing its agreement for the College Kids Savings Account program while it gathers information from the Treasurer's Office. The school board informally agreed during its meeting Sept. 12 to take this step in large part because of a [River City Journalism Fund](#) investigation published [in the RFT](#) and [St. Louis Public Radio](#) on June 7. The story showed that only 15 percent of the more than 23,000 eligible students in the district were taking part, that the average account had only grown to \$73, and that only the Treasurer's Office was earning interest off millions of dollars in accounts — while students weren't collecting a dime.

**Go Deeper:** Read the coverage in the [Riverfront Times](#).



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