



# STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 26th 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](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.



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[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.**

Support Local Journalism on Giving Tuesday Nov. 28

Around the world, Giving Tuesday has been a catalyst for millions of people to support causes, ranging from health and education to social justice and equity. The River City Journalism Fund covers them all with intrepid, no-holds-barred journalism. This Giving Tuesday we invite you to be part of our movement to support high-quality local journalism, by and for the St. Louis region.

You can support RCJF this Giving Tuesday by:

- [Making a gift here](#)
- Sharing our work with your networks and encouraging others to lend their support
- Multiplying your impact by using your employer's charitable-contribution match if available

Donate

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Let's dive in ...



A man in a light blue police uniform sits on a black metal stool. He is looking off to the side with a serious expression. He has a police badge on his chest and a radio around his neck. The background features a wooden door and a metal shelving unit with various items on it.

**RFAT**

RIVERFRONT TIMES

# Dislodged

The feds spent millions to keep people housed during the pandemic. Now the program's ended — and the same landlords who benefited are kicking Missourians out

By Mike Fitzgerald

## 1. Oh Lordy, Those Landlords!

**What's New:** In his blockbuster Riverfront Times cover story commissioned by the River City Journalism Fund, Mike Fitzgerald examines a government program that gave landlords an infusion of federal cash with few strings attached and no plans for a safe landing after the pandemic.

**Why It Matters:** Local landlords received hundreds of thousands of dollars from State Assistance for Housing Relief (SAFHR), a Missouri-run, federally funded program to help tenants hurt financially during the Covid-19 pandemic. But the landlords who benefited were kicking tenants out.

**Naming Names:** The story names the [area's biggest evictors](#) and how much they got from SAFHR. It also features University City attorney [Matthew Chase](#), who files 450 (not a typo) eviction cases in a typical month in St. Louis-area courthouses.

**Beneficiary & Victim:** Kalil Lofton (pictured on the RFT cover above) at first benefited from the program. But he was so confused by its application that he found himself with a court summons for having fallen behind in his rent and then having to pay attorneys fees to prevent eviction.

*"When I got the summons that was the first communication I got for anything," Lofton recounted. "There was no heads up. It was 'Here's your court date here. Here's what you got.'"*

**Go Deeper:** Read Fitzgerald's story in the [Riverfront Times](#) and at [St. Louis Public Radio](#).



# LISTEN, ST. LOUIS

with CAROL DANIEL

## 2. Carol Daniel Debuts

**What's New:** Veteran KMOX newscaster Carol Daniel announced her retirement last May. But just four months later, she's back at it

again — this time as a podcaster. Daniel is senior producer and host at Nine PBS for [Listen, St. Louis](#).

**Why It Matters:** As Daniel related in an interview with the Riverfront Times' Sarah Fenske: "Someone asked me, 'Well, what would you love to do? What would the dream be?' And I said, 'To tell the stories of Black St. Louisans, to tell the stories of people who are making change, to tell the stories of the issues we face and who's facing them and what we're getting right and what we're getting wrong.'"

**Unlike KMOX:** "We'll go, always, at least 30 minutes," Daniel told Fenske. "I want to have the conversations that I want to hear when I'm in my car. And these are conversations we aren't having in depth. We're getting 90 seconds, or if we're lucky, we're getting two or three minutes. And it's so much deeper than that. And so I'm so, so grateful to be able to do this now in this way."

**Go Deeper:**

- Listen to [Listen, St. Louis](#).
- Read Riverfront Times executive editor Sarah Fenske's [interview](#) with Daniel about her new gig.



Will Jordan's stewardship of the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council is under investigation.

### 3. Feds Investigate Housing Nonprofit

**What's New:** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has suspended \$650,000 in grants to the Metropolitan St. Louis Equal Housing and Opportunity Council, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch has reported.

**Why It Matters:** As reporter Nassim Benchaabane noted: "The investigation threatens to upend EHOC, the sole nonprofit in the region funded by HUD to enforce Fair Housing laws and combat housing segregation and evictions."

**The Probe:** HUD wants to know whether EHOC director Will Jordan, who resigned in October, mixed money with a private business operated by his wife, Nancy Jordan. Nancy Jordan had for years run EHOC's accounting, budgeting, office management, and grant writing. Nancy Jordan told the Post-Dispatch that she welcomed the scrutiny and the couple had nothing to hide.

**Go Deeper:** Read Benchaabane's story in the [Post-Dispatch](#).

**Now a Word from Our Sponsor**

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#### **4. Hoops Coming to Forest Park**

**What's New:** Civic leaders broke ground on the Forest Park basketball-courts project on Nov. 7, bringing hoops to the park for the first time since the park was established in 1876. The courts will be located just north of the Dennis & Judith Jones Visitor and Education Center and near the Dwight Davis Tennis Center.

**Why It Matters:** The prospect of basketball courts in the city's iconic park touched on race, with basketball particularly popular among African-Americans. The fact that this amenity couldn't be found in the park that features more than a dozen recreational opportunities sent a message of exclusion.

**A Poignant Backstory:** Andy and Peggy Newman are key benefactors behind the basketball project, which will be named in honor of their late grandson, Nicholas J. Booker. As a teen, Nicholas worked summers in the park for the Department of Parks, Recreation, and Forestry. He died in 2018 during his first year at Fordham University while playing pickup basketball.

**Go Deeper:**

- Read about the groundbreaking in the [St. Louis American](#).
  - Read about efforts to make Forest Park a more inclusive place in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).
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Lyndsey Ellis and Keona Dordor, the inaugural Heartland Journalism fellows.

**5. WashU, River City Journalism Fund Partner to Support Black Journalists**

**What's New:** Washington University and the River City Journalism Fund have formed an alliance to create the Heartland Journalism Fellowships at the university. The fellows will work on long-form journalism with support from various mentors. Their work will be published in [The Common Reader](#), which was founded



The ribbon-cutting ceremony at Affinia Healthcare's newly opened Ferguson clinic on Nov. 2,. (Photo by David Carson/St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

**6. Majority Black Staff at Ferguson Clinic**

**What's New:** Affinia Healthcare opened its newest freestanding primary-care clinic, a \$7.5 million facility with 23 medical exam rooms and services ranging from dental to behavioral healthcare.

by Gerald Early, an endowed professor in the departments of English and African and African-American Studies.

**Why It Matters:** Early noted that it is important to develop writers interested in long-form journalism, a genre that allows writers and readers to dig into a topic.

"I think it's very important for Black people to develop more journalists and more people who can do this kind of journalism. I don't feel that journalism is dead. With the coming of social media, I think there's more of a market for journalism and more ways to get your journalism out there than there's ever been. Developing long-form journalists is preparing for the future."

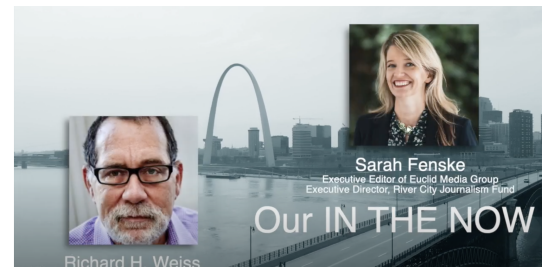
**The Inaugural Fellows:** Lyndsey Ellis, a St. Louis novelist, will work on a nonfiction project about why Black people are leaving St. Louis.

Keona Dordor, an Urban Studies major at WashU, is diving into the history of Greenwood Cemetery, which is in a state of disrepair. She will be interviewing people who have relatives buried in the North St. Louis cemetery.

**Go Deeper:** Read Chris King's interview with Early in the [St. Louis American](#).

**Why It Matters:** The clinic features a majority-Black medical team, and as the Post-Dispatch's Michele Munz points out, "some grew up in North St. Louis County, dreaming of one day caring for their neighbors."

**Go Deeper:** Read Michele Munz's story about the clinic in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).



Dick Weiss, Sarah Fenske and a talented, diverse board of directors lead the River City Journalism Fund.

## 7. Press Club Features River City Journalism Fund

**What's New:** Sarah Fenske and Dick Weiss joined St. Louis Press Club board member Dale Singer for a YouTube

broadcast featuring the work of the River City Journalism Fund.

**Why It Matters:** After the unrest in Ferguson, local storytellers began writing about families in the St. Louis area and the conditions that had shaped their lives. That effort has evolved into the River City Journalism Fund, which solicits story ideas, pays the writers, then offers the stories free for publication in local media outlets.

**Amplifying Voices:** RCJF chair Richard Weiss and executive director Sarah Fenske told Singer that RCJF has been able to recruit talented journalists of all ages and varied backgrounds, and then get their stories placed in a variety of local news platforms.

RCJF recognizes that the best ideas bubble up from the people who want to write about them. RCJF is then able to share them through local media, which have been facing draconian cuts to their staffs.

Fenske said the impulse behind the fund is simple: “Let’s find a way that we can advance local journalism in St. Louis.”

**Money Matters:** “I don’t want to say that money is no object,” Weiss said, “but we typically pay more than freelancers can get from publications that we’ve talked about. We really respect their talent, their time and their diligence.”

**Go Deeper:** Watch the Press Club's video, one in a series called [In the Now](#).



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