

STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 31st 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.



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Let's dive in ...



Liturgical Leaders in Motion perform a dance in the Old Cathedral in downtown St. Louis on Saturday, June 22, 2024, as part of the St. Louis Archdiocese's "Forgive Us Our Trespasses" program. (Photo by Allie Schallert for the St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

1. Archdiocese Seeks Forgiveness for History of Slavery

What's New: The Archdiocese of St. Louis released a report detailing the history of slaveholding within the church, including prominent figures like Louis William DuBourg and Bishop Joseph Rosati. The report identified 99 enslaved individuals found in church records, financial ledgers, and letters.

Why It Matters: Archbishop Mitchell Rozanski emphasized the importance of acknowledgment and seeking forgiveness for the church's history of slavery. The report challenges readers to confront the complex legacy of racism and oppression that continues to this day.

"It is a document where we say we can only move forward if we know our history." - Rozanski

"You can't go forward without asking for forgiveness, and even though there is nobody in this (group) that was enslaved or owned slaves, we still need to acknowledge it." - Margaret Toney, a Black Catholic in the Archdiocese of St. Louis

Go Deeper:

- Read Jesse Bogan's story in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).
- Read the Archdiocese's [report](#).



A graphic from the "Unsolved" series.

2. Unsolved: Homicide Investigations Hindered in St. Louis

What's New: A multipart investigation by St. Louis Public Radio, APM Reports, and The Marshall Project explores how police in St. Louis have struggled to solve killings, leaving thousands of family members without answers.

St. Louis had the highest homicide rate in the U.S. for five years in a row from 2014 to 2018. In 2019, the city faced a staffing and budget crisis and requested federal assistance. The federal agents found the police uncooperative and that the department faced staffing shortages and budget issues that resulted in poor investigations and a backlog of DNA samples.

Why It Matters: The series highlights the challenges SLPD has faced in recent years and the impact that lack of resources and inter-agency cooperation can have on solving violent crimes.

"I'm sure on paper, there is a budget, but as far as a practical point, there was no budget for me in the office. I had nothing," said Scott Aubuchon, former homicide commander in St. Louis, highlighting the impact of budget and staffing shortages on the police department's ability to investigate homicides.

Go Deeper: Read the series at [St. Louis Public Radio](#).



Supporters and opponents of a measure dealing with gender-identity issues gathered at a Francis Howell School District board meeting on Thursday, June 20, 2024. (Photo by Christian Gooden/ St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

3. Gender-Identity Issues Roil Francis Howell School District

What's New: The Francis Howell School District board has introduced measures that would ban discussions on gender identity and require approval for books and classroom materials. That has sparked opposition from students, parents, and teachers.

Why It Matters: The controversy highlights the potential impact of censorship and limitations on educational discussions.

"The proposed policies ... spell the death of curiosity," said Nathaniel Basset, a Francis Howell parent opposing the board's plans, expressing concern about the potential stifling of educational exploration and discussion.

What's Next: Board members say the proposals are in their early stages and are likely to change. The board is expected to continue reviews on the proposed measures, with final decisions anticipated in July.

Go Deeper: Read Monica Obradovic's story in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).



Riisa Rawlins, St. Louis Regional Health Commission CEO.
(Photo by Derik Holtmann, UM-St. Louis)

4. Rawlins Takes Command of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission

What's New: Riisa Rawlins has been named CEO of the St. Louis Regional Health Commission. The organization was founded in 2001 following the closure of St. Louis Regional Medical Center, the region's last public hospital.

Why It Matters: Rawlins' appointment highlights a commitment to eliminating healthcare disparities and promoting trauma-informed care in the community.

Background: Rawlins has more than 20 years of professional experience in healthcare and mental health. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Loyola University and a master's degree in social work from the Brown School at WashU, where she was a Bettie Schroth Johnson Women in Leadership scholar.

Go Deeper: Learn more about Rawlins at the [St. Louis American](#).

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(Photo by Rick Nahmias, American Cancer Society)

5. Cancer Society Focuses on Black Women

What's New: The American Cancer Society is conducting a VOICES of Black Women study to address the high cancer rates and disparities faced by Black women. The study aims to enroll 100,000 Black women from 20 states to better understand the unique experiences and drivers of cancer in this cohort.

Why It Matters: By participating in studies like VOICES of Black Women, individuals can contribute to research efforts that aim to advance equitable health outcomes.

Data Points:

- Black women have the highest death rates and shortest survival rates for most cancers of any racial group.
- Black women are statistically 40% more likely to die of breast cancer.

Go Deeper:

- Read Andrea Y. Henderson's story at [St. Louis Public Radio](#).
- Learn how to enroll through the [American Cancer Society](#).



Rob Connoley serves it up at Bulrush. (Photo by Kevin Roberts for St. Louis Magazine)

6. Restaurateur Shuts Down, Citing Missouri's "Hate Politics"

What's New: Rob Connoley has closed his nationally acclaimed restaurant in Midtown St. Louis, Bulrush, citing "hate politics" in Missouri.

Why It Matters: Connoley's actions shed light on how politics can affect the hospitality industry, and how social issues and political climate may have real-life consequences on a business.

Widely Known and Respected: As St. Louis Magazine restaurant critic George Mahle noted:

"In its five-year history, Bulrush and Connoley were the recipients of numerous local and national awards. The restaurant appeared on Ian Froeb's STL 100 list since its inception, this year taking top honors."

What's Next: Bulrush's closure may draw public attention to Missouri's political climate and issues surrounding the LGBTQ community. It could also spark a conversation about the intersection of politics and the hospitality industry and how businesses navigate competing pressures, such as the need to cater to customers' preferences and to stand up for their values and principles.

Go Deeper:

- Critic George Mahe's take on the closure in [St. Louis Magazine](#).
- Critic Ian Froeb's take in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).



Sarah Fenske and Ryan Krull (Photos from left by David Kovaluk and Jessica Rogen.)

7. A Door Slams Shut, Another Opens for Fenske and Krull

What's New: St. Louis Daily, launching this summer, will offer a fresh, concise look at the metro area's major stories with insights from award-winning journalists Sarah Fenske and Ryan Krull. The two lost their jobs when the Riverfront Times was sold to an as-yet-unidentified buyer, who has ended publication ... at least for now.

Why It Matters: St. Louis Daily will provide readers with a smart and succinct way to stay informed about the metro area's major stories, offering insights and analysis from experienced journalists. By subscribing to this newsletter, readers can easily access everything they need to know about the region in one convenient place, helping them stay connected and engaged with their community.

Says Fenske: "I can't wait to bring a daily dose of local news into your inbox and your earbuds."

Perhaps You Were Wondering: Yes, Fenske will continue to be a panelist on *Donnybrook* and a monthly host on *St. Louis On the Air* at St. Louis Public Radio, and she continues as the volunteer executive director for the River City Journalism Fund.

Go Deeper:

- [Subscribe](#) to St. Louis Magazine's Daily Newsletter.
 - What happened at the Riverfront Times? Read an account from Jacob Barker and Monica Obradovic in the [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).
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