

STL Equity Matters

Welcome to the 33rd 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 ...



From left: Keith Marty (Parkway), Danielle Tormala (Wentzville), Keisha Scarlett (St. Louis), and Paul Myers (Fort Zumwalt) are among seven superintendents who have been ousted or left their positions in the last six months.

1. School Districts Facing Superintendent Turnover Crisis

What's New: The region has seen significant turnover among school superintendents in the St. Louis area, with seven leaders either resigning or getting dismissed in the past six months.

Why It Matters: The trend coincides with a broader nationwide teacher and administrator shortage, leading to an influx of inexperienced candidates filling these positions.

What's Next: School districts are actively searching for new superintendents and facing challenges with a limited candidate pool.

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



Christina Sneed

2. U. City Educator Vows to Keep Teaching 1619 Project

What's New: In a story for the Gateway Journalism Review, Christina Sneed discusses the pressures teachers face in bringing diverse texts into the classroom. Four years after bringing [Nikole Hannah-Jones's 1619 text](#) into her classroom, Sneed says she was at first hesitant to incorporate it into this year's curriculum out of fear of public attacks and political pressure.

Sneed is currently curriculum coordinator for English language arts and reading instruction for the School District of University City and a [River City Journalism Fund board member](#).

Why It Matters: Sneed says all students benefit from reading from rich, powerful, diverse texts and engaging in civil discourse, analysis, and evaluation.

Who Should Decide What Gets Taught: That's easy, Sneed says. "Those who pursue specialized training and education to organize and facilitate the learning process for children. Not politicians. Not parents."

What's Next: "I will continue to boldly teach the 1619 Project and other rich, powerful, enabling texts because i believe in their ability to move us out of complacency and stagnancy one perspective at a time."

Go Deeper: Read Sneed's [story from the Gateway Journalism Review](#)



Kayla Reed, St. Louis Reparations Commission chair, at a Reparations Committee meeting Sept. 30, 2024. (Screen capture from city-provided video)

3. Reparations Commission Recommends Cash for African Americans

What's New: The St. Louis Reparations Commission has released a comprehensive plan aimed at addressing systemic racism and economic inequality faced by Black residents. Perhaps most intriguing and controversial: The commission called on the city to send checks to Black residents as reparations for slavery and discrimination. A Post-Dispatch story about the recommendations drew [more than a hundred comments](#), most of them negative.

Why It Matters: The report represents a step toward providing a framework for addressing past harms and dismantling longstanding barriers to economic opportunity for African Americans.

What's next: The commission hasn't said how much recipients should get. Instead, the panel is set to recommend the formation of another committee to study the matter.

Go Deeper:

- Read Austin Hugel's [report in the St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#).
- Read Alvin A. Reid's [story in the St. Louis American](#).



Margaret Weck (left), a participant, with Touchy Topics founder Tiffany Robertson. (Photo by Miya Norfleet for St. Louis Public Radio)

4. Touchy Topics Tuesday Encourages Conversations on Race

What's New: Tiffany Robertson founded Touchy Topics Tuesday in response to the social unrest following the police shooting of Michael Brown Jr. in Ferguson. Robertson aims to facilitate cross-cultural conversations about race and politics among community members and organizations.

Why It Matters: Touchy Topics Tuesday addresses the need for dialogue about racial and political issues in a historically segregated environment.

"I have a greater ability to actively and deliberately engage with people who I disagree with, [to] stay in that zone of uncomfortable disagreement longer," said Margaret Weck, a retired educator and activist. "I think the purpose is not just changing surface behavior but changing the curiosity about what has shaped other people to hold positions that are different than mine. And where is our common humanity? That's where our solutions are going to come from."

Go Deeper: Read Miya Norfleet's [story at St. Louis Public Radio and listen to the podcast.](#)

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5. St. Louis Jewish Community Faces Divisions Over Israel

What's New: The St. Louis Jewish community is experiencing significant division regarding discussions on Israel. Despite a rich tradition of debate and discussion, community members increasingly feel misunderstood and marginalized in their views.

Why It Matters: This division affects the community's ability to unite and advocate effectively for shared interests, ultimately undermining the strength of the Jewish voice on important issues.

What's Next: Some organizations are taking the initiative with discussions that focus on understanding diverse perspectives rather than converting others to a single viewpoint.

Go Deeper: Read Shula Neuman's [story in the St. Louis Jewish Light](#).



The River City Journalism Fund's launch party on Oct. 12, 2022.

6. Our Founding Story

What's New? Dick Weiss reflects on his journalistic response to the aftermath of Michael Brown's death in Ferguson. Rather than reporting on the unrest, he focused on the personal narratives of those affected by systemic racism.

Why It Matters: This initiative eventually led to the establishment of the River City Journalism Fund (RCJF), which produces in-depth stories that advocate for marginalized communities, trains young writers, and highlights social-justice issues. Families from underserved communities directly benefit from the exposure and support their stories receive. At the same time, the public gains insight into the lived experiences of marginalized individuals, challenging preconceived notions and inspiring action.

What's Next: Facing challenges as layoffs in local media continue, RCJF is committed to sustaining quality journalism.

Go Deeper: Read Weiss' [account in the Gateway Journalism Review](#).



Yusef Scoggin



Ken Page



Rochelle Walker



Percy Green circa 1964. (Missouri Historical Society photo)

7. Milestones

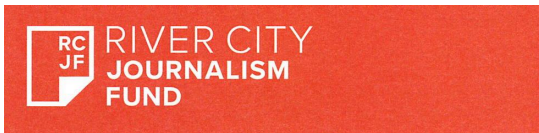
Yusef Scoggin: [Delmar Divine](#) has hired Scoggin as its new executive director. Scoggin most recently was CEO of Covenant House Missouri, a provider of shelter and support services for homeless and runaway youth. He also served as director of the Department of Human Services for the city of St. Louis and director of the Office of Family & Community Services for the St. Louis County Department of Human Services.

Percy Green: The civil-rights icon was honored this month for his work fostering inclusion in the construction industry with a walk from Luther Ely Smith Square to the Gateway Arch. The event was sponsored by St. Louis African American Artifacts Festival and Bazaar and the North St. Louis Neighborhood Council. The walk commemorates the summer day in 1964 when Green and fellow activist Richard Daly scaled a 125-foot construction ladder on the

then-incomplete north leg of the Gateway Arch [to protest the lack of African-American inclusion in the Arch's construction workforce.](#)

Ken Page: A world-renowned actor and the pride of Bishop DuBourg High School, Ken Page died at age 70 on Sept. 30, 2024, at his home in St. Louis. Page was known locally as the voice of the Muny, while also appearing in dozens of its productions. He also provided the voice for Mr. Oogie Boogie in the Disney/Tim Burton animated film *The Nightmare Before Christmas*. Other film credits included *Dreamgirls*, *Torch Song Trilogy* and *All Dogs Go to Heaven*.

Rochelle Walker: A Vashon valedictorian and scholar athlete, an Ivy League math scholar, a systems engineer for IBM, Wang, and Hitachi, an educator, and in her spare time a line dancer, Rochelle Walker, age 70, died Sept. 23, 2024. Hundreds attended her funeral service Oct. 5 in Ferguson.



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