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### Ferguson, Missouri: Difficult Stories

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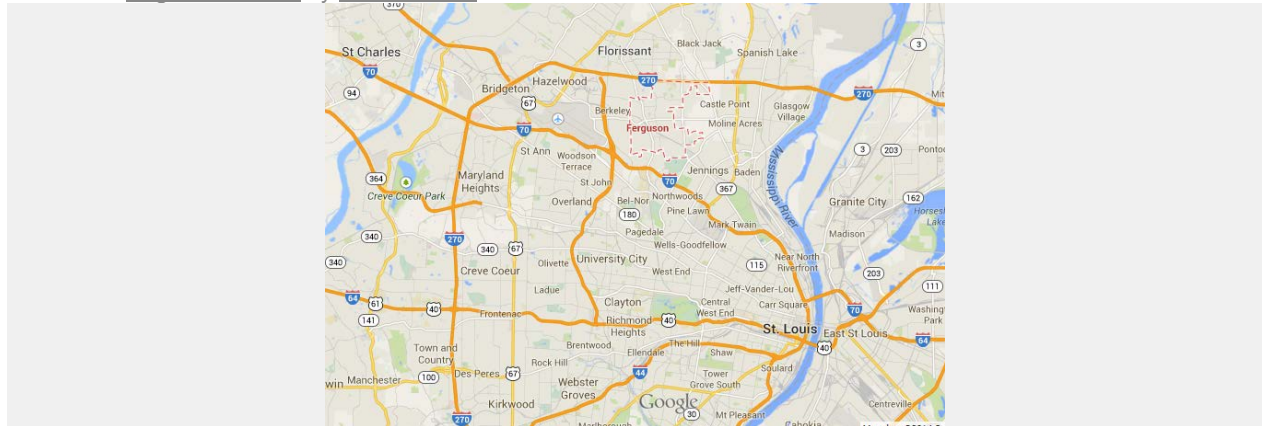
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## Ferguson, Missouri: Difficult Stories

Posted on August 12, 2014 by Jill Anderson



Ferguson, MO. Click to enlarge.

On Saturday, August 9, a [Ferguson, Missouri](#) police officer shot and killed Michael Brown, age 18, a graduate of Normandy High School who was about to begin classes at [Vatterott College](#) on Monday, August 11. Details remain murky but there is agreement in the press that the young man was unarmed. Tensions continue to flare in Ferguson, a suburb of St. Louis. The [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#) has reported that Benjamin L. Crump, the Florida civil rights lawyer who represented the family of Trayvon Martin, has been hired by the Brown family; additionally, the *Post-Dispatch* reports, Attorney General Eric Holder has asked for civil rights lawyers in the Justice Department to monitor this case, and the FBI is [reportedly working with the St. Louis County Police Department](#) to investigate the shooting. Crump and other civil rights leaders, including Cornell Brooks, president of the [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People \(NAACP\)](#), spoke Monday at a town hall meeting. The shooting and its [aftermath](#) has begun to receive national attention, with some coverage in the [New York Times](#), by [NPR](#) (among other venues). [Vox.com](#) has compiled [a list of what is currently known and what remains unclear](#).

Race has historically been a factor in the shaping of St. Louis and St. Louis County. University of Iowa history professor Colin Gordon has created the digital project [Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the American City](#), which uses digital census geography, archival maps, and historical and contemporary datasets to track migration and demographic patterns in St. Louis and St. Louis County from 1940-2000. [Mapping Decline](#) (and its accompanying book [Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City](#)) focuses on four themes: white flight; race and property; municipal zoning; and urban renewal.

Ferguson is immediately to the east of [Kinloch](#), the first African-American community in Missouri. In the 1980s the city bought out land in Kinloch towards a proposed expansion of the municipally owned [Lambert-St. Louis International Airport](#), displacing more than 70% of Kinloch's population. In 1975, in the case of [US v. State of Missouri](#), a US District Court ordered the Ferguson-Florissant School District (Florissant is immediately north of Ferguson) to annex the Kinloch School District and the adjacent Berkeley School District. In the 1976-1977 school year the Ferguson-Florissant Reorganized district underwent desegregation. Thus St. Louis County—and Ferguson—was part of the broader struggles over desegregation which have gripped (and [continue to grip](#)) the St. Louis metropolitan area since the [Brown vs. Board of Higher Education decision](#) in 1954.

For local coverage of this ongoing story, see the following (though there have been concerns that the media has misrepresented details of the shooting and protests):

- [St. Louis American](#) (African-American newspaper)
- [St. Louis Post-Dispatch](#)
- [KSDK](#)
- [KMOV](#)
- [St. Louis Public Radio](#)

To learn more about St. Louis and St. Louis County's history, see these sources (among others):

- Amy Stuart Wells, [Stepping over the Color Line: African-American Students in White Suburban Schools](#) (1997)
- Mary Kimbrough, [Victory without Violence: The First Ten Years of the St. Louis Committee of Racial Equality \(CORE\), 1947-1957](#) (2000)
- Kenneth S. Jolly, [Black Liberation in the Midwest: The Struggle in St. Louis, Missouri, 1964-1970](#) (2006)
- Gerald Early, ed., [Ain't But a Place: An Anthology of African American Writings about St. Louis](#) (1998)
- Daniel J. Monti, Jr., [Semblance of Justice: St. Louis School Desegregation and Order in Urban America](#) (1985)
- Gerald W. Heaney and Susan Uchitelle, [Unending Struggle: The Long Road to an Equal Education in St. Louis](#) (2004)