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Invested Faith Awards 10th Class of Fellows

Washington, DC: Invested Faith has named a tenth class of faith-rooted social entrepreneurs. These six social innovators are working to address systemic issues of injustice in their communities while building sustainable financial models. The Fellowship includes an unrestricted grant, an invitation to tell their story through the Invested Faith community, and the opportunity to join the Invested Faith RESOURCED program, a peer support network of Fellows across the U.S.

Invested Faith has now awarded 47 Fellowships in less than 3 years. Invested Faith Fellows are working in 23 states plus the District of Columbia. The first class of Fellows was awarded in July of 2021.

Invested Faith Founder Rev. Dr. Amy K. Butler reminds us that Invested Faith Fellows are working to change the world. “The word that comes to mind when I think about this tenth class of Invested Faith Fellows is ‘abundance.’ The sheer volume and variety of work these world changers are undertaking is more than enough to remind us that the healing work of the Divine will not be contained within our careful delineations. I celebrate with these Fellows and with all of us who long for a world that is just and healed and whole.”

The following individuals were selected as Invested Faith Fellows in January of 2024.

Heber Brown, The Black Church Food Security Network, Baltimore, MD

From its beginning in 2015 as a garden planted on church grounds, the Black Church Food Security Network has grown to become a national alliance of more than 200 congregations who work together to co-create Black Food ecosystems and address the root causes of food apartheid. Founded by Dr. Heber Brown, the network organizes Black churches, uniquely positioned to serve as food hubs and distributors to improve community health. Food is sourced from an expanding group of 125 participating Black farms, including an apple orchard in New York and citrus farms in Florida.

Moy Mendez, Hope Center, Blue Island, IL

The Hope Center is a community center born out of a local church with the mission to empower neighbors to become creators and leaders through programs in agriculture, technology, and auto mechanics. Originally a food pantry, Founder and Executive Director Moy Mendez reframed the mission to address food insecurity on a deeper level and to offer neighbors options for work and learning that could instill real hope in the struggling community of Blue Island, IL.

Garry Mills, Shoot Basketballs NOT People, Philadelphia, PA

After too many of his friends and students died of gun violence, Garry Mills' mission became simple. Shoot Basketballs NOT People" (SBNP) uses basketball as the vehicle to save and change the lives of youth. Through supportive services and resources, educational opportunities and, of course, basketball, SBNP works to decrease violence that perpetuates a cycle in which too many of today's victims become tomorrow's criminals.

Jon Adam Ross, The Inheritance Theater Project, New York, NY

The Inheritance Theater Project works with communities to build relationships across divides through collaborative theater projects inspired by shared cultural touchstones and spiritual texts. Communities reach out to the Inheritance Theater Project as a way to create conversation and healing around incidents caused by deep racial, religious, or other cultural divides. Founded by Jon Adam Ross in 2015, the company has created original theater in 15 cities across the US.

Jillian Shannon, Neotopia Bookstore, San Antonio, TX

Neotopia is a postmodern bookstore with a carefully curated selection of books in the realm of progressive theology, philosophy and culture, along with a community space that offers classes, lectures, book clubs and movie screening and discussion. Founded by Jillian Shannon, the bookstore is designed to be a sanctuary for seekers and skeptics of any or no religion who want to challenge and discuss theological questions often unwelcome in many religious communities.

Morgan Villar, Dignity Homes, Atlanta, GA

Dignity Homes is a non-profit development firm that builds affordable homes for the housing insecure and will offer housing capped at 30% of family income in the greater Atlanta area. Founded by Morgan Villar, Dignity Homes is committed to developing long-term communities that intervene in the cycle of poverty and create a clear path to homeownership for Americans who have been denied access to the American dream.

About Invested Faith: [Invested Faith](#) is a fund for faith-rooted social innovators founded by Rev. Dr. Amy Butler in 2019 in response to declining church attendance and the need for a new

model of philanthropy. Invested Faith is a bridge between traditional churches and social innovators who are creating new expressions of faith and community.

For additional information and photos, visit the [Press Center at Invested Faith](#).

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