

Rootbert Fund

The Rootbert Fund supports fellows' graduates pursuing their studies at an accredited institution based in the United States. The Fund seeks candidates motivated by spiritual values whose daily actions are guided by spiritual motives. Fellows enjoy a life-long community with other Fellows, including annual retreats and online connections.

As a first-generation Liberian-American, my personal and professional journey in mental health counseling has been deeply influenced by my diverse lived experiences. My journey begins in the heart of Liberia, a country rich in culture but marred by civil unrest. As a first-generation Liberian-American, my identity is rooted in the duality of a resilient African heritage and the diverse tapestry of American life. This unique blend of cultures has been the bedrock of my passion for mental health counseling, especially in communities of color. My academic pursuits at Towson University and Johns Hopkins University laid the foundation for my commitment to mental health. These institutions provided me with a robust understanding of psychological principles and a platform to develop my counseling skills. As a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor, I have strived to bridge the gap between academic theory and real-world application, particularly in underserved communities. Currently, as a Ph.D. candidate at The George Washington University, I am dedicated to contributing to the counseling profession through research, education, and supervision. The cornerstone of my academic and professional endeavors lies in destigmatizing mental health services within culturally diverse communities, particularly those of African and African American descent. My role as a middle school counselor at Two Rivers Public Charter School in Washington, D.C., has been pivotal in shaping my approach to mental health. My holistic therapeutic approach integrates spiritual, physical, mental, and emotional aspects, fostering a deeper understanding and well-being in individuals. Here, I've worked tirelessly to address the emotional, behavioral, and social needs of a diverse student population, many of whom face challenges stemming from socioeconomic and racial disparities.

A profound experience that significantly shaped my spiritual outlook was the establishment of The Morris Foundation, aimed at providing trauma-informed counseling to children and families in Liberia, a country deeply scarred by civil war. This endeavor was not just

a professional commitment but a spiritual journey, reflecting my deep-rooted belief in the healing power of empathy, community, and resilience.

The process of setting up the foundation in a post-conflict country tested my faith and resilience. I witnessed firsthand the devastating impact of trauma on mental health and the transformative power of culturally sensitive support. This experience reinforced my belief in holistic healing - addressing not just the mind, but the spirit and community as well. Through this journey, I learned the importance of patience, understanding, and the need for spiritually grounded approaches in mental health. It highlighted the fact that healing goes beyond clinical interventions; it requires a nurturing of the human spirit, a reconnection with one's cultural identity, and a rebuilding of community bonds. This experience has profoundly influenced my therapeutic approach, guiding me to incorporate spiritual values and cultural sensitivity into my counseling practices. In conclusion, establishing The Morris Foundation was not just a step in my professional journey but a pivotal moment in my spiritual development. It taught me the value of empathy, the strength of community, and the power of faith in overcoming adversity, shaping my outlook towards a more holistic, culturally aware, and spiritually attuned approach to mental health and wellbeing.

My journey as a first-generation Liberian-American and Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor has been deeply influenced by my spiritual values and a steadfast commitment to fostering enlightenment in society. The Roothbert Fellowship has significantly empowered my endeavors to create a more enlightened society, especially in the realm of mental health and societal wellbeing. My academic pursuit at The George Washington University, where I am conducting a Ph.D. research on the impact of storytelling as a mental health intervention in African communities, is a testament to my dedication to this cause. Storytelling, in my view, is more than a therapeutic tool; it is a spiritual journey that connects individuals to their roots, fosters community bonds, and heals emotional wounds. This approach aligns with the Roothbert Fund's emphasis on spiritual values, as it transcends traditional mental health practices to embrace a more holistic and culturally sensitive methodology. In my professional capacity as a counselor at Two Rivers Public Charter School and as the founder of The Morris Foundation, I have strived to bring these values to life. My work in these roles not only addresses the mental health needs of diverse populations but also embodies a spirit of compassion, empathy, and

community service. These efforts are driven by a deep-seated belief in the power of human connection and the transformative impact of spiritual guidance in healing and personal growth.

Being a Roothbert Fellow has enabled me to deepen my research and expand my outreach initiatives. With the Fund's support, I have aimed to develop and implement storytelling workshops that not only serve as therapeutic interventions but also as platforms for cultural exchange and spiritual awakening. These workshops are designed to empower individuals, particularly those from marginalized communities, to find their voices, share their narratives, and build resilience against societal challenges. Furthermore, the financial assistance from the Fellowship has allowed me to engage more actively in community-based projects. I envision collaborating with local schools, community centers, and religious organizations to create safe spaces for dialogue, learning, and healing. These collaborative efforts have been geared toward fostering a society that values emotional well-being, cultural diversity, and spiritual growth. In alignment with the Roothbert Fund's preference for candidates motivated by spiritual values, my daily actions are guided by a profound sense of purpose and responsibility. I believe that every individual has the potential to contribute positively to society, and my role is to facilitate this process through counseling, education, and advocacy.

In conclusion, the Roothbert Fellowship has not only supported my academic and professional endeavors but also reinforced my commitment to creating a more enlightened society. Through this support, I have continued to advocate for mental health awareness, cultural sensitivity, and spiritual growth, thus contributing to the Fund's vision of nurturing individuals motivated by spiritual values and societal improvement.

My Ph.D. program at The George Washington University, focusing on storytelling as a mental health intervention, is pivotal for my career goal of innovating counseling practices. This program's rigorous academic and research framework allows me to explore culturally resonant therapies, especially for African communities, and has enabled me to further develop and disseminate effective, culturally sensitive mental health interventions, bridging gaps in current mental health care practices for underserved populations.