THE FOUNTAIN FUND

Fall 2026 Newsletter

PHILADELPHIA



JAMAL WASHINGTON

Client Partner Spotlight: Jamal Washington

When we caught up with **Jamal Washington**, he was sitting inside the 22-foot trailer his Fountain Fund loan helped him transform into a popular caffeine delivery machine.

The idea for **Morning Mud** was born while Jamal was serving time. Determined to hit the ground running when he returned, a referral led Jamal to the Fountain Fund. A $4,500 loan provided the launchpad he needed to gut, reframe, insulate, and equip his trailer. Today, Jamal is hosting cold brew taste-testing and building his brand step-by-step.



While the trailer is his current workspace, Jamal is playing the long game: aiming to build a brand that expands onto big-box store shelves across the country. He says, "I often go into Target and these other spaces and I see coffee and the cold brews on the shelves and in the refrigerator, and **it's always a dream of mine to be able to have my product there**."

"Keep pushing forward because nobody's going to do it the way you are. No one is going to see it the way that you see it. So you have to continue to keep pushing forward on that story."
— Jamal Washington



ABOVE: *Mike Butler (L) joins other panelists at Prosperity Now in September.*

ADVANCING ECONOMIC JUSTICE IN PHILADELPHIA

Philadelphia Site Director Mike Butler represented the Fountain Fund on the national stage as a panelist at the Prosperity Now Summit in September, sharing how our mission-driven micro-loans break down financial barriers for justice-impacted entrepreneurs. Mike was also selected from 65 nominations across the city to join the prestigious Philly People Leaders cohort! This executive fellowship ensures that the Fountain Fund's Philly team remains grounded in **human-centered, resilient leadership** as they expand loans and second-chance entrepreneurship opportunities for returning citizens.

"Just having those intentional conversations about hard issues that you really can't go to people in your organization with, and people that will just give you that feedback with no strings attached, I'm very excited about that." — Mike Butler



SALEEMAH MCNEIL

PARTNER SPOTLIGHT

Oshun Family Center

Oshun Family Center exists to create a safe, informed, and culturally responsive environment for our community. They are currently fundraising for a capital campaign to build Philadelphia's first Maternal Wellness Hub, a dedicated space for **community connection and holistic care**. Oshun is also celebrating a major milestone: becoming fully credentialed with Community Behavioral Health to begin accepting clients with Medicaid.

The relationship between Oshun and the Fountain Fund grew out of Executive Director Saleemah McNeil's leadership on the Fountain Fund's Local Advisory Board. By uniting our lending and financial coaching with Oshun's holistic care network, we collaborate to listen, invest in families, and foster long-term community strength.

PHILADELPHIA AT A GLANCE:

Interest in Philly lending is on fire!

250 *LOANS*

$2M *TOTAL LENDING*

$675K *RECYCLED CAPITAL*

VIRAL MOMENT DRIVES DEMAND

Following a viral video post by a prominent Philadelphia influencer that reached over 4 million viewers, the Fountain Fund saw a massive spike in community awareness this August. The feature generated thousands of direct inquiries and approximately 800 potential client applications, underscoring both the urgent need for our low-interest loans and the extraordinary momentum building behind our mission.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

"They make sure you know that they believe in you, that they got your back, and that they're going to support you. They have just been really phenomenal." — Client Partner

NEWS FROM HEADQUARTERS

OUR MISSION: *The Fountain Fund increases economic opportunities for formerly incarcerated people to improve their lives and remain in their communities.*

LENDING HOPE

Sharing Our Model Nationwide

Across the country, The Fountain Fund is stepping onto regional and national stages to **change the narrative around reentry and fair lending**. In October, Executive Director Erika Viccellio and National Director of Client and Community Engagement Tez Tolbert presented about the Fountain Fund's leadership development program at Stand Together Foundation's national Catalyst convening. Erika also joined site directors Aaron Morin (Boston) and Mike Butler (Philadelphia) at the GreenLight Fund Summit in Oakland to collaborate on community-driven solutions with other grantees from around the country. Building on his work at Prosperity Now's lending forum, Mike Butler was invited to deliver a plenary address at their Atlanta Regional Summit this November. From Richmond Site Director Tom Mundy testifying before the Virginia House of Delegates to staff delivering national summit keynotes, our team is demonstrating that **when you extend resources and opportunity to returning citizens, entire communities prosper**.

That national influence extends directly to media platforms, where our leaders share lived experience to reframe the reentry conversation. On *A Life, Unedited*, host Marc Hunt sat down with Tez Tolbert and Loan Operations Specialist Sankofa Alkebu-Lan to discuss the hidden barriers after incarceration and how the Fountain Fund extends trust and capital. On Charlottesville's Envision Radio, Director of Lending Shantel Hopkins reflected on his personal transformation and how his grandmother's advice to "be his own man" inspires him to **lead with grace** when coaching Client Partners.

Grounded in this deep field experience, our team continues to invest in internal excellence. This summer, Shantel Hopkins and Sankofa Alkebu-Lan attended Credit Builders Alliance's intensive training in Miami on competitive scholarships, earning prestigious **Master Trainer certifications**. Using a **train-the-trainer model**, Shantel and Sankofa are sharing their knowledge with our team and Client Partners to deliver even more powerful financial coaching.



From left, podcast host Marc Hunt, Sankofa Alkebu-Lan, and Tez Tolbert.

"Good people, good organizations do exist. Because all I ever wanted was an opportunity." — Sankofa Alkebu-Lan



Sankofa Alkebu-Lan and Shantel Hopkins in Miami.

"We attended the CBA conference as participants and presenters, and then in the same year became Master Trainers. And now the world is just open." — Shantel Hopkins

WE ARE GROWING!



Brooks Wellmon
NATIONAL DIRECTOR OF PHILANTHROPY

We are thrilled to welcome two new additions to the Fountain Fund team. **Brooks Wellmon** joins as National Director of Philanthropy, building creative funding pipelines that secure sustainable resources for Client Partners nationwide. **Sherman Collins** steps into his role as Loan Specialist after a decade as an East Coast commercial driver, bringing a deep heart for ministry and community service to our lending team. As Sherman shares, "What stands out to me is that the Fountain Fund is mission-driven. They care more about helping people than just a loan." Please join us in giving both Brooks and Sherman a warm welcome!



Sherman Collins
LOAN SPECIALIST

NEW ORLEANS UPDATE

In March 2022, the Fountain Fund launched a partnership with First 72+ in New Orleans, combining holistic reentry services provided by First 72+ with micro-lending to support Client Partners on their financial journeys. Since the partnership began we have provided **more than 100 low-interest loans totaling more than $250,000**. Because of changes in leadership and staffing, we are winding down operations in New Orleans and will not be extending new loans there. We remain deeply committed to supporting our existing New Orleans Client Partners through the remainder of their loan terms, celebrating their ongoing achievements and honoring the lasting impact of our work together.

NATIONWIDE LENDING IMPACT

Since our founding in 2017

$6.5M+ IN LOANS	**1,327** LOANS
1,113 CLIENT PARTNERS	**$3.2M+** RECYCLED INTO THE FUND