



SPOTLIGHT SERIES

REVEREND JOSEPH L. MORROW

"I love America more than any other country in this world, and, exactly for this reason, I insist on the right to criticize her perpetually."

- James Baldwin, *Notes of a Native Son*

In 1955, author and activist, James Baldwin published his first collection of non-fiction essays entitled *Notes of a Native Son*. Beautifully written and searing in their account of American racial tension and inequity, Baldwin's essays were celebrated for their brilliant writing and unprecedented honesty in exploring his experience as a black man in white America. Published during the birth of the Civil Rights Movement, Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son* would solidify him as one of the greatest American writers and voices for change - inspiring activists and artists alike.

Reverend Joseph L. Morrow was only in elementary school when James Baldwin passed away in 1987, but he would grow up to read Baldwin's work - paying close attention to the idea that to love America does not mean to refuse to criticize and change it for the better. The America Rev. Morrow would become a young man in, was in many ways, vastly different than the America of James Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son*. While attending Georgetown University for undergrad, Rev. Morrow met his roommate, Aaron Wealth's CEO, Gary Hirschberg. There, two college students of different racial and faith backgrounds would live and learn together and go on to form a lifelong friendship. And yet, some similarities remained - compelling Rev. Morrow to critically engage for change.

It was during this period of Rev. Morrow's life that his interest in faith, cultural bridge building, and social justice began to blossom and he made the decision to seek graduate theological education. After some time, uncertain that he wanted to become a pastor, Rev. Joseph made the decision to leave the program and enter the corporate world working in project management for a global software firm. In time, Rev. Morrow's passion for justice and the use of "moral imagination" in approaching his work established him as the unofficial philosopher and theologian of the organization. His calling had become louder and more clear so he went to seminary for his Master's Degree and be ordained in the Presbyterian Church USA.

Rev. Morrow's first work as a Pastor was with Interfaith Youth Core where he worked to integrate religious knowledge and diversity to achieve IFYC's mission of creating an ecosystem of people and campuses designed to make interfaith cooperation the norm. He went on to serve his denomination as a member and vice-chair of its historic and ecumenically praised Mission Responsibility Toward Investment (MRTI) committee. MRTI works to ensure that the denomination's extensive investment reflects its values and are socially responsible by utilizing various methods of shareholder engagement and leveraging ecumenical and interfaith relationships. Rev. Morrow helped develop criteria for the denomination's rating of oil and gas sector companies as MRTI prioritizes addressing climate change.

Through his work with MRTI, Rev. Morrow learned the importance of embracing corporations as extensions of ourselves and therefore, critically engaging with them to ensure that there be both a financial profit and profit for the world.

Rev. Morrow is an ordained Presbyterian pastor currently serving Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago. As a leader within the Presbyterian Church USA, he also serves as the chair of the Presbyterian Mission Agency Board. Rev. Morrow possesses experience in guiding socially responsible investing through the lens of addressing climate change, dedication to corporate engagement as a means to solve the challenges facing our world, and a breadth of knowledge in the areas of interfaith diversity and social justice. Along with the rest of our 8-member Impact Advisory Board, we strive to leverage their diverse backgrounds to achieve our goal to become a leader in the space of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Investing.