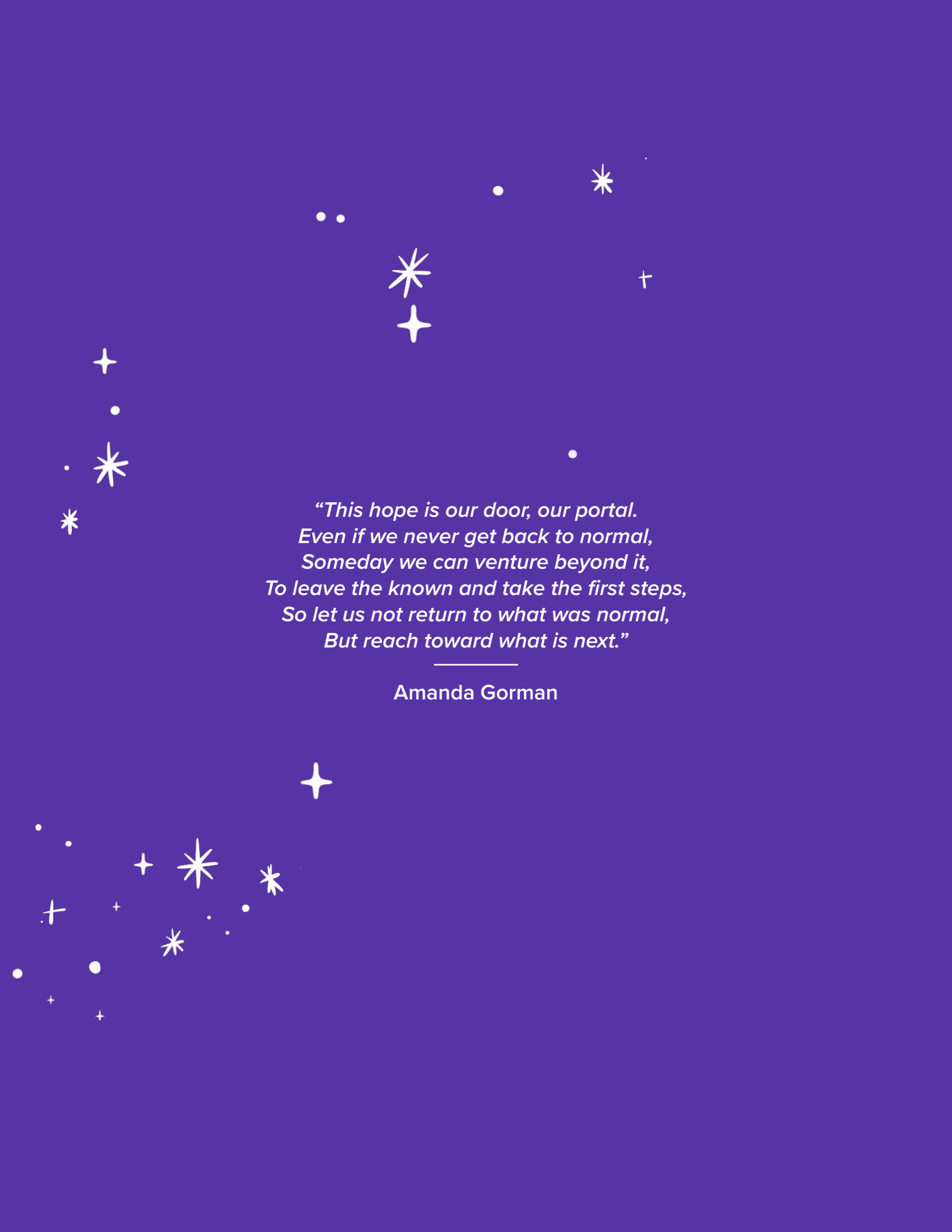




# Moonshot edVentures

Impact Report 2016-2021





*“This hope is our door, our portal.  
Even if we never get back to normal,  
Someday we can venture beyond it,  
To leave the known and take the first steps,  
So let us not return to what was normal,  
But reach toward what is next.”*

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Amanda Gorman

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This report is dedicated in loving memory to  
Kinyata Jackson

Our beloved member of Cohort 4, the founder of  
Remembrance Wellness and Yoga,  
a community activist, wife, and mother whose joy and  
smile will live in our hearts forever.

# A LETTER FROM OUR CEO

I first learned of Moonshot at a tiny coffee shop around the corner from Sloan's Lake. A friend told me that CDL, founder of Moonshot, was hiring, and that he thought it was my dream organization. While at a conference in Denver, I took a thirty minute Uber ride across town to meet with her during a break. If you've heard CDL tell the story, she describes it as 20 minutes of me grilling her with questions about Moonshot. All I remember is the undeniable feeling that this was the organization for me.

I joined Moonshot in 2019 when I, much like our Fellows, felt disenchanted by the oppressive limitations of the local education systems. Moonshot's mission of surfacing and supporting a diverse pipeline of leaders to design and launch their own learning environments felt like a much needed breath of fresh air. I jumped at the chance to serve leaders who shared the experiences of our students by creating new, equitable systems specifically designed for our leaders and students to thrive.



## So, where have we been?

In only five years, Moonshot has developed a pipeline for diverse and incredible talent in Metro Denver. We have worked with 84 phenomenal Fellows through the Moonshot Fellowship, leaders who came to us with passion, drive, and ideas that are disrupting the status quo of the education ecosystem. In 2021 alone, our leaders worked with over 4,500 students through their schools and programs in Metro Denver. Every year, we hear from more and more leaders on the need for spaces that allow them to engage authentically and in community with others; we had 90 interested applicants for 15-20 spots for Cohort 5 alone. We have come a long way from our early days of lugging workshop supplies across town every Thursday evening, and at the same time, it feels like our work is just beginning.

## Where are we going next?

We're looking forward to four key priorities in the upcoming year:

- **Digging in with our 84 alumni** who are launching and leading schools and programs to support their sustainability, the growth of their ventures, and the rigor of learning that their students are experiencing.
- **Welcoming our sixth cohort** into the Fellowship, bringing us to **100 leaders & education entrepreneurs** in Metro Denver
- **Launching a Program Track for our Residency** modeled after a successful School Launcher Residency, where program founders spend a year with Moonshot developing sustainable revenue streams, scaling their impact, and building a strong non-profit board.
- **Setting the course for Moonshot's next 5 years** of innovation and impact. We are beginning our strategic planning work to set the direction for us to continue to move the needle in creating a learner-centered ecosystem in Metro Denver and beyond.

Moonshot began and continues as a community effort, as a village of passionate, equity-minded individuals coming together to make equity and justice happen for our kids. To our community of Fellows, alumni, board, team, funders, mentors, and partners: we could not do this work with you. Thank you.

In solidarity,

  
Kat Ling  
CEO

## MISSION

Moonshot edVentures seeks to surface and support a diverse set of leaders to design and launch the learning environments of tomorrow.

## VISION

We envision a learner-centered system, led by individuals who share and empathize with the experience of the students and communities they aim to serve, where all children become lifelong learners who persist through life and meaningfully contribute to their communities.

## WHY WE EXIST

Moonshot edVentures aims to solve several connected problems. The growing opportunity gap between white students and students of color, which is driven by both those teaching and leading, as well as the type of learning environments students are able to attend. We know that having teachers, leaders, and role models who represent students' experiences and identities are crucial and impact student achievement rates, graduation rates, consideration of college attendance, student mental health, and social-emotional outcomes.<sup>1</sup>



Moonshot believes that if we invest in the leadership development of **local, underrepresented leaders**, support them in developing new models of learning environments that look dramatically different than the status quo, and provide them with the resources, tools, and support to launch, then we can **transform outcomes and opportunities** for students traditionally underserved by our current system

<sup>1</sup> Carver-Thomas, D. (2018). Diversifying the teaching profession: How to recruit and retain teachers of color. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. <https://doi.org/10.54300/559.310>.

<sup>2</sup> Denver Public Schools. (2021, October). Facts and figures. Denver Public Schools. <https://www.dpsk12.org/about/facts-figures/#students>

<sup>3</sup> Colorado Department of Education (2021). Count of teachers by district, ethnicity, and gender [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/2020-21teachersby-raceandgender>

<sup>4</sup> Colorado Department of Education (2021). Principal and assistant principal by gender and race [Data file]. Retrieved from <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cdereval/2020-21principals-byraceandgender>

# MOONSHOT IN ACTION

**For five years, Moonshot has been building a diverse pipeline of leaders through our flagship program, The Moonshot Fellowship.**

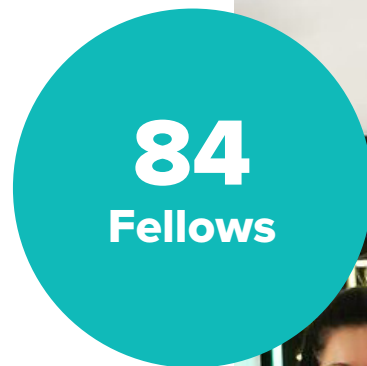
The Moonshot Fellowship provides a safe and authentic space for leaders in education to explore designing and launching a new learning environment like a school or program.

After completion of the first phase of the Fellowship, our Fellows advance to alumni-hood. In alumni-hood, our Fellows have access to services and supports including micro-grants and large grants opportunities, 1:1 career and fund-raising coaching, an Expert Bench of consultants, therapy with BIPOC providers, community building events, and professional development workshops.



The three stage program (named Explore, Cultivate and Prepare For Launch) focuses on leadership development, designing and piloting in partnership with students and families, identifying pathways to launch, and building connections to local and national networks, all within a tight-knit, supportive cohort community.

Across five cohorts, our Fellows have launched micro-schools, charters, non-profits, art centers, consulting companies, after-school programs, push-in programs, summer enrichment programs, apps, podcasts, turnaround schools, and a mobile mental health clinic.



In 2021, the Moonshot Residency Program was launched as a full-time, intensive program designed for Moonshot edVentures Fellows who are committed to launching and leading high-quality new charter schools. Four Fellows representing three schools made up our inaugural cohort with plans to launch schools in Denver County, Adams 14, and Jefferson County.



Fellows in Cohort 2 during their “Excellent Schools and Programs Visit” in the Bay Area

**116**

**hours of programming completed per Fellow in the Explore (first) stage**

**252**

**empathy interviews conducted with students and families in 5 years**

**40**

**local and national “Excellent Schools and Programs Visits” completed by Fellows in 5 years**

**“ I’m proud to be a Moonshot Fellow. Joining this community was life changing for me as a woman of color in educational leadership...More than anything this fellowship has helped me develop a mindful connection to myself as a leader and gain confidence in myself. ”**

**Ashlee Morris  
Cohort 5 Fellow & Founder of  
Girl Talk**

# OUR HISTORY

## 2015

Christine DeLeon "CDL" imagines what it could look like to support local leaders in education in developing new learning environments for their communities on a post-it note at a 4.0 Schools workshop

## SPRING 2016

CDL co-founds Talk to Action, a community group dedicated to DEI in education and begins conversations with local K-12 leaders and education entrepreneurs

## FALL 2016

Moonshot edVentures is founded in Denver with CDL as Founder & CEO

## SPRING 2017

Moonshot hires its first employee, Lindsay Finklang, and begins recruiting members of Cohort 1

## FALL 2017

The School Launcher Fellowship begins with Cohort 1 with 16 Fellows

## WINTER 2017

Moonshot hosts first Showcase with Cohort 1 sharing ideas for innovative learning environments with the public

## FALL 2018

The School Launcher Fellowship Cohort 2 begins with 15 Fellows

## SUMMER 2019

Kat Ling and Sasha Green join the Moonshot Team

## FALL 2019

Cohort 3 begins with 17 Fellows

## WINTER 2019

Moonshot gets an office space of its own at 3840 York Street

## SPRING 2020

COVID-19 pandemic begins and Cohort 3 shifts to all virtual programming, running Moonshot's first virtual piloting sessions with students





## FALL 2020

Cohort 4 begins as the first-ever all virtual cohort with 19 Fellows building community & their ventures over Zoom

VJ Brown and Alex Chavez join the Moonshot Team

## WINTER 2020

CDL transitions from her role of CEO

Moonshot hosts the first virtual Showcase Event with over 200 attendees joining from across the United States

## SPRING 2021

Moonshot has its strongest Fellow recruitment season with 90 interested applicants

## SUMMER 2021

Moonshot begins the Residency Program, a intensive full-time school launcher program, with 4 school founders working to create new schools in Denver, Adams 14, and Jefferson County

The Second Annual Shoot for the Moon Challenge raises over \$200,000 for 12 Fellows and their ventures

## FALL 2021

Kat Ling becomes Moonshot's second CEO

Cohort 5 begins with 14 Fellows with a return to partially in person programming

## WINTER 2021

Moonshot hosts its 5th Annual Showcase and 5 Year Anniversary Event in person with 200 guests in attendance

## EARLY 2022

Moonshot begins strategic planning for its next 5 years

# 5 YEARS OF TRANSFORMATION

Moonshot has witnessed the transformative power of bringing together like-minded individuals to build and create. Our Fellows have centered their voices and identities in their work, disrupted the status quo, and dismantled barriers in their pursuit of justice and equity in education.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT Cory's Story

Cory Montalvo's Moonshot story begins with a familiar scene: sipping a coffee in a local cafe with Moonshot founder, CDL. With one foot out of education, Cory was seeking an opportunity that uplifted his talents alongside his humanity. His next plan was to move to Austin and go to grad school. CDL then pitched Cory an idea: "Why not start a school?"

His response? "Hell no, not starting a school. That's a ridiculous concept."

And yet, that "ridiculous concept" transformed the next few years of his life. Through Moonshot's inaugural cohort, Cory build out an educational program model that nurtures "a sense of safety where you feel like you can fail and still be affirmed and where showing up fully is celebrated instead of repressed." The program is called Youth Empowerment Broadcasting Organization (YEBO).

Cory believes the access to networks and supports that Moonshot facilitates for Fellows is an exceptional benefit. He explains that "no one ever teaches you how things work, how

the system works, how things get funded, and who makes decisions. Moonshot put all of those people into a room with us. It was really, really helpful to get into the doors of some of those rooms that we never had access to, particularly as leaders of color in our own communities."

**“ Moonshot put all of those people in a room with us. It was really, really helpful to get into the doors of some of these rooms that we never had access to, particularly as leaders of color ”**

Five years later, Cory is now Founder and CEO of YEBO, a nonprofit organization with a team of six. YEBO cultivates habits of belonging, wellness and independence in youth by leveraging media for the development of civic practices. YEBO has two main programs: The Remix, which invites high schoolers to design, build, and manage their own media ventures; and Digital Holistic Leadership, a partnership with CU Boulder that facilitates collaboration between high schoolers from Northeast Denver and undergraduates to re-imagine the role of digital media and co-design new learning environments.

*Learn more at [yebomedia.org](http://yebomedia.org)*





Cohort 5 Fellow, Destiny Hardney giving her keynote address to guests at Showcase on December 9, 2021

**34**

Fellows received a vertical promotion since joining the Fellowship

**4,500**

students served through Fellows' ventures and Moonshot piloting in 2021

**100%**

of Fellows agree the Fellowship helped them build and improve their venture design

*“Throughout my experience, I marveled at the talents of my fellow cohort members. I was humbled to be in their presence. I **gained confidence by listening to their stories, accepting feedback, and obtaining encouragement.** There is power in connecting with like-minded Persons of Color that believe that positive change can happen for underrepresented youth. With each passing week, my conversation went from ‘I’m not worthy of being in the community of such greatness’ to ‘I am great and deserve to uplift and be uplifted by other greatness.’ **I was transforming.**”*

Roy Holloway

Cohort 3 Fellow & Principal of Omar D. Blair Charter School



# A NOTE FROM OUR FOUNDER

Dear Moonshot Family,

As a new mom, people say that the days are long, but the years are short. In some ways, Moonshot was my first “child” and the saying rings true for the last five years of Moonshot. There are too many memories to recall in a short letter. Perhaps what I’d love to leave you all with are a few requests that I hope takes Moonshot and its network boldly into the next five years under Kat’s leadership.

**To Moonshot Fellows** - Three lessons: 1) When faced with the choice between competition and collaboration, recognize each other’s gifts — your work is far more powerful when you work together. 2) Building an incredible team cannot be underestimated - an entrepreneur can only go so far before the idea of sharing one’s vision and allowing others to embrace it and take it on becomes far more important. 3) You have to make sure that you are open to receiving as much as you love the fulfillment of giving. I’m not the first to say it, but put your oxygen mask on before assisting others. (This also goes for the Moonshot team!)

**To Moonshot’s supporters** - Give these entrepreneurs what they need. Several thousand dollars acknowledges the gifts these leaders bring into the world, but these entrepreneurs are still working their day jobs, caring for their families, and finding side gigs to pay the bills while living out their dreams. If we truly believe in them, we have to give them the level of funding that allows them to do this work while not running themselves into the ground. Remind them that they need to pay themselves!

**To Moonshot’s families and friends** - Thank you for giving these folks the space to dream and build in a way that they may have never had the chance to before. It certainly does require sacrifice from their entire network to make their dreams into realities and I have extreme gratitude for each of you.

**To all of you** - If you can, thank a Moonshot team member for the work they do during the days, nights, and weekends for this organization, year after year. They are the smallest and mightiest team who do so much work out of care and love for each person in the Moonshot network—the Fellows, the alumni, the funders, the partners, the community members and the students.



I couldn’t be more confident that with this incredible network of alumni, the Moonshot team, the contractors who have supported Moonshot’s programming, as well as all of you, Moonshot’s impact will continue to reverberate through our local communities and inspire what’s possible elsewhere. So much gratitude for you - yesterday, today, and always.

xo,



Inaugural Innovation Award Recipients at Moonshot's 5 Year Anniversary Event: (left to right) Branta Lockett, Joanne Liu, Ellie Adelman, and Tania Chairez

**265**  
applicants to the  
Fellowship since our  
inception

**25**  
ventures launched  
in Metro Denver

**\$202k**  
raised in the 2nd  
Annual Shoot for the  
Moon Campaign

*“ We don’t even know the full scope of what we are creating yet. Our alumni are collaborating and working in community at all levels in the local education ecosystem. Just by seeing how that’s happening, in a short five years, there’s no telling what we can do by investing in the people truly changing communities. It’s amazing to think about what’s possible. ”*

*VJ Brown  
Alumni & Partnerships Manager, Moonshot edVentures*

# 5 YEARS OF INNOVATION

We believe that no dream is too big, risky, or impossible to achieve. Over the past 5 years, we have seen a demand for innovation in the ecosystem and a deep passion for ventures with community and love at their core.

## ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT A Tale of Two Amandas



As alumni of Cohort 2, Amanda Gonzales and Amanda Marquez quickly realized that they were kindred spirits. With a combined 39 years of working in education as first generation, Latina women, Gonzales and Marquez both saw a desperate need for innovation in the ecosystem. Marquez was certain that after meeting Gonzales through Moonshot and “joining forces over drinks” that they were going to work together to create something beautiful.

However, the road ahead would prove challenging. According to Gonzales, “trying to innovate while working full time as part of a huge system was defeating.” In 2020, they decided to apply, and were accepted, into Moonshot’s inaugural Residency cohort, where they began working on their vision for Be The Change Community School (BTCCS).

The Moonshot Residency is a full-time, year-long program where Residents spend

four days a week working in administrative roles in host schools and one day a week in Moonshot programming, designing their school models and preparing a high-quality charter application. Residents also receive executive coaching, support from application writers, learning

**“ The Residency program not only reminded me that I was capable, but that Be the Change Community School is possible. ”**

through instructional rounds, and mentorship from principals. Gonzales stated that “the Residency program not only reminded me that I was capable, but that Be The Change Community School is possible”

While working as Assistant Principals at North High School, the Amandas began to lay the groundwork

for BTCCS. They hosted a project-based learning pilot with a cohort of teachers to gain data and insight for their school design model. Every Thursday of the Residency is spent co-working with three other Residents and ideating what their school would look and feel like. Be the Change Community School, a prospective 9-12 high school in Adams 14, will provide rich educational and project-based learning opportunities for BIPOC communities in Commerce City.

Working in collaboration with the students and families of Commerce City and the district, their ultimate hope is to create an innovative school option that puts learning back into the hands of students and the communities they come from.

*If approved, Be the Change Community School plans to open in Fall 2023 in Adams 14.*

*Learn more at [bethechangecommunityschool.org](http://bethechangecommunityschool.org)*

# THE MOONSHOT NETWORK

To our network of Alumni: from late workshop evenings, pitch revisions, and piloting to challenging each other's thinking, co-creating, and designing with love, your passion and commitment to each other, the Moonshot team, and your communities are unparalleled. Thank you for sharing your dreams and talent with us.

## Cohort 1 (2017)

Alesha Arscott  
Amy Lovell Boylls  
Angelina Walker  
Anthony Grant  
Auset Maryam  
Branta Lockett  
Cory Montalvo  
Jessica Martin  
Jim Stephens  
Justin Darnell  
Karolina Villagrana  
Keely Vaughan  
Meredith Stolte  
Paul Yumbla  
Sean Wybrant  
Wisdom Amouzou

## Cohort 2 (2018)

Alejandro Fuentes Mena  
Alex Malone  
Amanda Gonzales  
Amanda Marquez  
Antonio Parks  
Candice Smith  
Cheryl Jackson  
Cristina Chacon  
Elom Amouzou  
Jessica Valsechi  
Kelly Okoye  
Mario Yuzo Nieto  
Mia Coffing  
Nikesha Holliday  
Susana Cabrera

## Cohort 3 (2019)

Bre Donnelly  
Brian Lightfoot  
Brianna Mestas  
Erin Williams  
Ginnie Logan  
Hilari Smith  
Jordan Roehl  
Juan Sanchez  
Keena Day  
Lela Payne  
Marianna Lucero  
Miguel Gonzalez  
Paul Clifton  
Roy Holloway  
Shalelia Dillard  
Sofiya Erman  
Tania Chairez

## Cohort 4 (2020)

Anne Keke  
Anthony Lucero  
Ellie Adelman  
Enrico Gomez  
Fryda Faugier Ferreira  
Gabiella Carrethers  
Hanna Franzblau  
Jasmine Massey  
Joanne Liu  
Joyelle Naomi  
Kinyata Jackson  
Luis Antezana Alba  
Megan Casimir  
Oliver Thornton  
Olivia Gardner  
Paul Taylor Loftley  
Rowena Capuno  
Tatenda Blessing Muchiriri  
TeRay Esquibel

## Cohort 5 (2021)

Ángeles Osorio-Cooper  
Anna Graves  
Ashlee Morris  
Benu Amun-Ra  
Bushenga AaronAli  
Destiny Hardney  
Donna Chrisjohn  
Eboni Nash  
Ezequiel Villanueva-Ruiz  
Jean Nguyenloc  
Joe Zarella  
Melissa Leach  
Nestor Meza  
Stephanie Tran

**“ The Moonshot network is incredible, supportive, brilliant, and all-in for one another's success. ”**

*I know that I will be counting on the knowledge, skills, and mindsets I cultivated in Moonshot for the rest of my life. ”*

**Megan Casimir**  
**Cohort 4 Fellow & Founder**  
**of Words Beyond Walls**



# VENTURES



# WITH GRATITUDE

Over the past 5 years we have seen the incredible power of our community in making the impossible, possible. Thank you from the bottom of all of our hearts for taking the leap and being on this journey with us.



## OUR SUPPORTERS

Amazon  
The Anschutz Foundation  
Carson Foundation  
Chan Zuckerberg Initiative  
Climb Higher Colorado  
Community First Foundation  
The City and County of Denver  
Daniels Fund  
The Denver Foundation  
Donnell-Kay Foundation  
Education Leaders of Color  
Gates Family Foundation

The Gateway Fund II of The Denver Foundation  
IMA Foundation  
The Jacques M. Littlefield Foundation  
Margulf Foundation  
NewSchools Venture Fund  
The Nord Family Foundation  
RootED  
Rose Community Foundation  
The Reinvention Lab, powered by Teach for America  
Walton Family Foundation  
Wend Collective

In 2021, Moonshot received a record breaking amount of donations from 644 individuals!

A digital listing of all of our donors can be found at [moonshotventures.org/donors](https://moonshotventures.org/donors)

# OUR COMMUNITY

33Vincent  
Aaron Walker  
Abby Schaller  
Abigail Hasberry  
Dr. Alex Marrero  
Amanda Tien  
Andrea Pursley  
Andrew Allen  
Antonio Tapia  
Aspen Academy  
Aurora Public Schools  
Brandon Zeigler  
Brayan Montes-Terrazas  
Britt Erickson  
Brooke Brown  
Charles Dukes  
Climb Higher Colorado  
Cody Ostenson  
Corey Graham  
Da Vinci Schools  
David Clifford  
David Portillo  
Denver Green School  
Denver Metro Chamber Leadership Foundation  
Denver Public Schools

Derrick Johnson  
Diana Rojas  
Dirk Bird  
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Empower Community High School  
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Jason Atwood  
Jessica Valsechi  
Jocelyn Cordell  
Jon Schweig  
Kristina Scala  
Landon Mascareñaz  
Liz Aybar Conti  
Lizzie Choi  
Logan Boon  
Matt Reamy  
Max Tweten  
Melanie Rivera  
Michael Chiang  
Monica Ryan  
New Legacy Charter School  
New Schools Venture Fund  
Nicole Bergeron

Nora Flood  
North High School  
Open Media Foundation  
Opportunity 180  
Pat Donovan  
Promise54  
Reamy Consulting Group  
Rico Munn  
Rito Martinez  
Riyaz Gayasaddin  
Sabrina Skinner Lehmann  
Sarah Burns  
Sergio Rios  
Sharhonda Bossier  
Sharma Graham  
Sonya Marques-Correia  
Susana Cordova  
Tara Topper  
The Management Center  
Tim Farmer  
Trina Maull  
Urban Leaders Fellowship  
Veronica Crespín-Palmer  
Washington Navarrete

# OUR TEAM

## Staff

Kat Ling  
*Chief Executive Officer*

Sasha Green  
*Program & Operations Manager*

VJ Brown  
*Alumni & Partnerships Manager*

Alex Chavez  
*Finance & Operations Senior Manager*

## Contractors

Jennifer Douglas  
*Residency Co-Lead*

Erin Sciscione  
*Residency Co-Lead*

Tawnya Ramirez  
*Accountant*

## Board

Joshua Klaris  
*Board Chair*

Ian Connell  
*Board Treasurer*

Crystal Rountree  
*Board Member*

Caleb Fields  
*Board Member*

Elizabeth City  
*Board Member*

Harsha Sekar  
*Board Member*

*A special thank you to Jocelyn Cordell, Brayan Montes-Terrazas, and Alex Chavez for their work in creating this report*

