The HUSD Mission Statement
The mission of Howard University School of Divinity, as a graduate theological and professional school, is to educate and form academic and religious leaders to serve the Church and society, and to celebrate the religious and cultural heritage of African-Americans, the African Diaspora, and Africa.

Howard University School of Divinity seeks to be a global leader in theological education in a community driven by intellectual rigor, a passion for justice and freedom, and a relentless search for truth.

Five Reasons Why White Jesus is So Offensive
By Lawrence W. Rodgers (New MDiv Candidate)

In light of the recently released 21st Century Fox movie “Son of God” that stays in line with the erroneous, hippie-looking, white Jesus, I have decided there are five main reasons why some people find a white Jesus offensive.

In reverse order of importance, here they are:

5. It perpetuates the stereotype that nothing good can come in black or brown.

It is not a secret that Eurocentric ideals are written into our American vocabulary. Just grab a dictionary and simply look up the word “white” and you’ll see it is often described as “pure” and “wholesome.” Now look up “black.” It is often described as “ugly” and “evil.” This, along with other things, has caused many people of color to have low self-esteem and feel like that they and their people are unaccomplished. An accurate portrayal of Jesus would help to counter such beliefs. It is easy to hate black and brown people when you truly believe that nothing godly comes from them. I believe an accurate portrayal of the world’s Savior would help such individuals to see the error in their thinking.

4. It is historically inaccurate and poor scholarship.

No scholar worth the price of a small-town haircut actually believes that Jesus was European. Even secular scholars who believe in the historical Jesus reject this notion. (continued on page 2)...

Readings From Jail
By Charles Butler Neto (New MDiv Candidate)

Walking into a prison is scary. No matter how many times you show up, walking through a locked gate with razor wire is not easy. You come with wisdom but you feel like a fool. You bring prayer, you see trickery. A prayer can be heard, but then diminished when a prisoner walks off with holy oil. Small lies lead to bigger deceptions. Always tell the truth. Be loving but do not lie. One day someone who is nothing but lies changes to the point his companions don’t recognize him. A woman recognizes that she has a gift when no one would listen. Don’t give up.

The SGA Cookout
The SGA Cookout will be held on Saturday September, 20 from 2pm-5pm in the promenade area on the divinity campus.

2ND Annual SGA Cookout
Sat. September 20TH 2:00-5:00p Divinity Promenade

Food Fun and Games!!

For more updates and an e-version of this publication head on over to:
www.divinity.howard.edu
A taste of Islam, A Christian’s Perspective

By Ardaine Gooden

Recently, Howard Magazine featured Dr. Zainab Alwani, assistant professor of Islamic Studies in the Howard University School Divinity (HUSD). Little did I know, coming from the island of Jamaica, that I would have an academic encounter with the teachings of Islam via the Holy Qu’ran. For all I knew, all Muslims were suicide bombers and had a terrorist agendas. So when my advisor suggested that I take a course introduction to the Qu’ran as an elective, my thoughts immediately went on red alert; how would I benefit from this course academically? Would I be betraying my Christianity and my church? Would I somehow be swayed into becoming a Muslim? What would be the influence of this course on my thinking? However, I would soon discover, as Aden Ross states, that, “learning requires openness to new information and ideas, and often our willingness to change our minds (Religion Today 2013, 30).” If that wasn’t hard enough to swallow, Ross further comments, “it asks the students to entertain some dissatisfaction with the current knowledge and opinions about religion (Religion Today, 30).” The discipline of religious studies as I would learn is not for the “simple minded and the faint of heart.”

As the semester progressed, it still felt strange and at times awkward to continue taking this course under the suspecting eye of Christianity. Through lectures and reading of the Qu’ran, we were exposed to a supreme God who is sovereign and creator. Human beings were created by God as stewards and have a sacred obligation to our fellow human beings socially, economically, politically and religiously. It was not easy to learn that Jesus was only designated as a prophet, how could they adamantly believe that considering we Christians believe him to be Lord and God. The class provided the space to have an honest conversation about Islam and the correlation between the Quran and its adherents. For the many readers of this article you might be wondering if I am still convicted of my Christian faith and my answer is a resounding, yes. Without betraying my faith, I have to acknowledge the diverse nature of religion and my fellow human beings right to practise their faiths. Should I be indifferent and negate engagement with persons of other religions? Should I apply the bigotry of righteous indignation? That would not be the Christian thing to do and it would certainly defy my Christian faith which teaches me to love my neighbor. Therefore, if am a true follower of Christ, I cannot stereotype who my neighbor is, even if their beliefs are unlike mine.

So as you take your journey through the hallowed walls of Benjamin Mays Hall, you might have to take off your blinders and be bold enough to join the conversation.
Five Reasons Why White Jesus is So Offensive cont’d...

By Lawrence W. Rodgers

The only people who fight for this erroneous image of Christ are some evangelical Christians.

3. **Because it matters.**

Whenever I talk about “a white Jesus,” someone always asks me, “Why does it matter?” I always respond with, “You are right: Why does it matter? Because it obviously matters to people who continue to portray Jesus as a European when he clearly was not.” Then I ask this follow-up question: “Imagine if I made a movie about George Washington and I portrayed him as a black man, or maybe King George as a black man. Can you imagine the outcry?” If I, or someone else, were to do such thing, there would be a tremendous outcry from many offended parties, and rightfully so, because it causes one to ask the question, “What is so bad about portraying people honestly?”

2. **It is an obstacle that hinders many from coming to Christianity.**

Comedian Chris Rock once said, “Black Christians are like Black people with no memory.” Many may not know what Chris Rock was trying to say, but I do because I have spent a lot of time trying to evangelize and teach the Gospel of Christ. Chris Rock is saying that Black Christians have amnesia and have forgotten how, in the past, some used Christianity and the image of a white Jesus to oppress their ancestors during the American Slave Trade. I cannot tell you how many times I have run into black and brown people who feel that Jesus was something imposed on black people in slavery. They think people were forced to worship a white Jesus, and with the image of a white Jesus, people were taught to hate black skin. Granted, the image of Jesus was used in some evil ways, and the Bible was taken out of context to oppress people and to justify some sick ideologies. However, I wish I had an opportunity to introduce these individuals to the real Jesus; the notion of a European Jesus is so flabbergasting to them that they count it all as myth! Therefore, every time White Jesus is promoted, it pushes such individuals, in my opinion, further and further away from the real Jesus.

1. **It is just not accurate.**

From a historical perspective, Jesus was a Middle Eastern Jew prior to the diaspora (dispersing of Jews around the world) of A.D. 70, which means that Jesus would have been much darker than the occupants of Israel today because the diaspora sent many Jews north to Europe and others South into Africa. In 1948 when the Jewish state established independence, a massive migration took place of Jews from European countries, and Muslim countries. Only forty-two percent of the world’s Jewish population lives in Israel today, and Judaism or forms of it can be found in several places, including African countries such as Ethiopia.[1] From a biblical perspective, it states in Revelation 1:14-15 ESV that, “The hairs of his head were white, like white wool, like snow. His eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined in a furnace, and his voice was like the roar of many waters.” Many commentators have tried to talk their way out of this passage describing Jesus as “brass” to protect the ridiculous idea of a white Jesus, but let us not deny the truth that the Biblical author is trying to portray to us. The writer wants us to imagine Jesus just as he described.

In conclusion, hopefully one day Christians will stop making themselves look ridiculous by ignoring the historical and biblical record of the phenotype of Jesus. Please stop portraying Jesus and other Bible characters like this. Be true to the historical record, and stop trying to conceal what most people already understand. It is time.

Thanks for Reading!
~Lawrence W. Rodgers

Perception vs Deception

By Dyan Abena McCray-Peters

Recently in one of the classes at HUSD, we were instructed to view a slide and share what we saw. Interestingly enough, several of the students saw something in the slide that another (other students) student did not. As each student raised their hand to identify what they perceived, it encouraged other students to take a closer look. This exercise moved me to look at perception and deception experienced in our daily lives.

Perception allows individual sensitivity to discern what the eyes are seeing, combined with feelings associated with the experience. When we look at something (picture, sign, movie, news report) we form opinions about it based on our own level of enlightenment. We watch television and we see an Ad that is marketing a product we use, and are encouraged by the fact that it is on “sale” that we need it.

Deception is a ruse used to send a message that is untrue, however we often conform to the message as if it had validity. This subterfuge gives us information that is misleading and possibly dangerous. It is very important to view all things with a critical ear and eye in an effort to ascertain truth.

Since the election of our Commander and Chief, President Barack Obama, I have intentionally read news articles, watched daily news on the television (ABC, CBS, NBC, FOX, WORLD NEWS, and BBC), listened to talk radio, and watched news commentators. I am amazed at the amount of effort that has gone into discrediting the work of President Obama during his two terms in office. The people of this country spoke loudly with their votes when he was re-elected for a second term. Yet both the perception and deception has increased in an effort to berate him.

Example: Beginning in 2009 President Obama: Ruled to prohibit the use of torture by CIA and military personnel to prisoners; Prohibited employers from discrimination based on gender, race, color, national origin, age and disability; Captured and destroyed Somalian Al-Qaeda leader Saleh Ali Saleh Nabhan; Captured and destroyed Al-Qaeda operative Hussein al-Yemeni; Had HIV and AIDS care covered under Obamacare; Destroyed Al-Qaeda’s #3 commander Sheik Saeed al-Masri; Awarded $1.5 billion to over 75,000 black farmers who had been victims of discrimination when applying for farm loans; Captured and destroyed Osama Bin Laden; Signed the American Taxpayer Relief Act in 2012; Signed into law marriage for GLBT persons; and level women’s pay equal to men’s, and the list goes on and on.

Deception has reared its ugly head through those who have access to funds that control the news media (television and newspapers); thus creating this scam to make our President appear to be incapable of doing his job. There is a sign on the metro here in DC that says “If you see something, say something” so I am going to step out on the ledge by saying that there is a great possibility that, the very ones who are behind the atrocities we see in the news performing barbaric behavior may be citizens of the USA and reside on its soil. I think we would all be surprised at the end of the day who really is participating in the perception and deception of the state of this world.

This message is solely my thoughts and opinion and not of those at HUSD. - Dyan Abena McCray-Peters
Fall 2014 HUSD Faculty-Student Colloquia

Monday, September 22, 2014, 5pm-7pm
HUSD Howard Thurman Chapel

Please join us for the Fall 2014 Faculty-Student Colloquia Series. Our faculty lecturer is Dr. Michael Willett Newheart, HUSD Professor of New Testament Literature and Languages. Rev. Paula E. Hall, HUSD MDiv Alumna, M.A. Religious Studies student, will respond to the lecture. The purpose of the Faculty-Student Colloquia is three-fold: 1) to celebrate, showcase, and nurture faculty’s research and writing; 2) to inspire students to make stronger connections between their faith, academic life, and the world around them; and 3) to provide a venue for exchanging provocative and innovative ideas with those working directly in the public square. The HUSD Faculty-Student Colloquia Series promises to help build collegiality and collaboration among faculty and promote mentorship between faculty and students.
Raise Your Voice

By Dean Gay Byron

“So, what then shall we say about these things?”

Another mother has lost her son to gun violence at the hands of a police officer. This time it is in Ferguson, MO. Different city, same senseless loss of a human life. As the details around the shooting continue to roll in, one thing is clear: Black men, Black youth, and Black boys are not safe in this country. Another thing is clear: White privilege, white supremacy, and systemic racism continue to run rampant and color the myth of democracy in this country.

So as we watch this crisis unfold and listen to the commentaries from the media, legal experts, and other representatives of justice, what then are we to say and DO about these things? Where have all the prophets gone? Who will watch and raise a clarion call for peace, for truth, for equity? Who will stand from the rooftops and street corners and make some noise and hold these instigators and perpetrators accountable?

Who will declare that nothing shall separate us from the love of God? Sound your trumpets - Raise your voices!

HUSD Gay-Straight Welcomes the 2014-2015 Student Body!

MISSION: To provide a safe space for fellowship between heterosexual and same-gender-loving persons. Creating a space where we can facilitate a mutually beneficial dialogue concerning a host of culturally relevant issues in religious, academic, and community settings.

VISION: To work to improve school climate for all students, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity/expression and raise awareness of anti-LGBTQQIAAP (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, Queer, Questioning, Intersex, Allies, Asexual, and Pansexual) harassment in school and society; draw attention to gender role construction; gender inequity, confront issues such as sexism, heterosexism, and homophobia.

WHO CAN BE A PART OF THIS GROUP: Students, Faculty, Alumni and Community

Up Coming Events and Topics: “Breaching the Wall of Silence, A Chat about Sexuality and Sexual Orientation, Aids Awareness in our Community, A Worship Service, Movie Night and panel discussions on cutting edge topics;

FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: Howard-HUSD Gay Straight Alliance

Twitter: @HUSDGayStraight

Executive Board

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“As Agents of change in this world, we are the ones we’ve been looking for”
**Young People Rise**

*By Deal Pollard III*

We are a vibrant society Young and old, black and white Hispanic and Asian, Pacific Islander and Indigenous Peoples Gay and straight, queer and questioning And everything in between

We are a civic society Blue state and red, Democrat and Republican Independent and Green, apolitical and progressive North and south, east and west And every place in between

We are a pluralistic society Protestant and Catholic, Muslim and Jew Hindu and Buddhist, atheist and agnostic Religious and spiritual, devout and indifferent And every creed in between

We are an unjust society Of have nots, privileged over the aggrieved The advantaged advance and the incarcerated yearn to breathe free Social elites carefully preserve the status quo ante Occupying forces are everywhere

In 1964, a young courageous Black-led movement led successful efforts to register Black voters in the Deep South. We called it Freedom Summer. Fifty years later, young Black people face a culture of death that diminishes and extinguishes their life chances without respect of region. Now is the Winter of our Discontent.


Dying Black youth are the window onto the spiritual trauma that affects an entire nation. The lives of young Black men and women, far from expendable and cheap, are an incredible gift to us. We must cherish them as our children, as our very own. Yet this is not enough. We will love them. We will educate them. We will empower them. We will safeguard them with our very lives.

As the country braces once more for the possibility of war and rumors of war – in Iraq, Ukraine, Gaza and beyond – and hate crimes abound in the name of faith (Boko Haram), morality (Uganda), politics (U.S. – Mexico borderlands) and health (Ebola) a devastation of epic proportion threatens our land.


Occupying forces are everywhere.
Want To Be A Contributor?

The Weekly Word is a weekly publication of the Howard University School of Divinity published under the direction of Rev. Paula Hall, Manager of Media and Communications. The Weekly Word is published each Wednesday during the academic year. The deadline for weekly publication inclusion is each Friday. Written contribution by Faculty, Students, Staff, and Alumni are welcomed. For submissions or questions, contact: HUSDWeeklyWord@gmail.com