

Taurean J. Webb

Taurean J. Webb, director of the Center for the Church and the Black Experience (CBE) and instructor of religion and race at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, was named a 2020-2021 non-resident fellow in the Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative (RCPI) at Harvard Divinity School. In addition to supporting his scholarship and integrating him into the intellectual life of the RCPI, the program has also commissioned Webb to produce a visual arts exhibition, featuring the works of African- and Arab-descended artists.

Webb is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Morehouse College, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in philosophy and religion. He holds Master of Arts degrees in Black and cultural studies from Columbia University and Northwestern University. He is currently completing the doctor of philosophy degree at Garrett-Evangelical, with research that looks at “Blackness” and “Palestinian-ness” as racial formations, and the ways in which an internationalist theological hermeneutic of [visual material] culture can uncover how these communities organically move against white supremacy and Judeo-Christian hegemony.

The RCPI is a joint initiative of Harvard Divinity School and Harvard Kennedy School of Government and includes a robust program of research, coursework, internships, fellowships, and experiential learning, all engaging the roles religions play in contemporary Middle East culture, public policy, and international affairs. The initiative examines the potential for a more sophisticated and capacious understanding of religion to yield fresh insights into contemporary challenges and opportunities for just peacebuilding.

“I’m excited to be welcomed into the Harvard community,” said Webb. “I’ve long respected the RCPI’s desire to integrate US and international scholars into the university’s ecosystem in a way that centers questions of religious literacy, religious understanding, theological investments and how these things impact global conflict, transitional justice and ethical peace-making.”

We’ve assembled a solid team of folks who are excited about this exhibition because of our balance between high-profile and emerging artists, as well as how we’re trying to capture the wonder(s) of religious expression, culture and freedom. And as a creative, I think it fits beautifully into what we’re trying to articulate as a core commitment of the CBE: an international doing of ‘Black’ religious experience that takes seriously the ‘materiality’ of culture as a faculty colleague often says. I’m excited about how Garrett and the CBE might plug into these networks, going forward.”

Dr. Lallene J. Rector, president of Garrett-Evangelical, said, “Along with many others, Garrett-Evangelical shares in this excitement regarding Taurean Webb’s selection as a Religion and Public Life Fellow. Not only does this opportunity deepen his own scholarship and inform the related activism, but Garrett-Evangelical’s commitment to examining the intersection of Black religious life in the public realm is also strengthened as we celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the Center for the Church and the Black Experience.”

Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, a graduate school of theology related to The United Methodist Church, was founded in 1853. Located on the campus of Northwestern University, the seminary serves more than 450 students from various denominations and cultural backgrounds, fostering an atmosphere of ecumenical interaction. Garrett-Evangelical creates bold leaders through Master of Divinity, Master of Arts, Master of Theological studies, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Ministry degrees. Its 4,500 living alumni serve church and society around the world.