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## Fearless Friday: Jeffrey White

Jeffrey M. White  
*Gettysburg College*

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## Fearless Friday: Jeffrey White

### **Abstract**

In today's edition of Fearless Friday, Surge is thrilled to honor the work of the incomparable Jeffrey White '17. Jeffrey is a junior from Baltimore, Maryland, who is majoring in Religious Studies and minoring in Music. As an incredibly active member of the campus community, he is involved in leadership roles in many facets of campus life. He works as a Resident Assistant (RA), serves as the Program Organizer for the Office of Intercultural Advancement, the Live Music Chair of the Campus Activities Board (CAB), and devotes time to being a Peer Learning Assistant for Anthropology 103 as well. [*excerpt*]

### **Keywords**

Surge, Surge Gettysburg, Center for Public Service, Building Bridges, college, Community, community development, cultural appropriation, diversity, Faith, Fearless Friday, leadership, Office of Intercultural Advancement, Race, Residence Life, Scripture, Social Justice

### **Disciplines**

African American Studies | Civic and Community Engagement | Educational Sociology | Race and Ethnicity | Race, Ethnicity and Post-Colonial Studies | Service Learning | Sociology of Culture

### **Comments**

Surge is a student blog at [Gettysburg College](https://www.gettysburg.edu) where systemic issues of justice matter. Posts are originally published at [surgegettysburg.wordpress.com](https://surgegettysburg.wordpress.com) Through stories and reflection, these blog entries relate personal experiences to larger issues of equity, demonstrating that -isms are structural problems, not actions defined by individual prejudice. We intend to popularize justice, helping each other to recognize our biases and unlearn the untruths.

# SURGE

[ VERB ] : to move suddenly or powerfully forward or upward

## FEARLESS FRIDAY: JEFFREY WHITE

April 1, 2016

In today's edition of Fearless Friday, Surge is thrilled to honor the work of the incomparable Jeffrey White '17. Jeffrey is a junior from Baltimore, Maryland, who is majoring in Religious Studies and minoring in Music. As an incredibly active member of the campus community, he is involved in leadership roles in many facets of campus life. He works as a Resident Assistant (RA), serves as the Program Organizer for the Office of Intercultural Advancement, the Live Music Chair of the Campus Activities Board (CAB), and devotes time to being a Peer Learning Assistant for Anthropology 103 as well.

As the Program Organizer for Office of Intercultural Advancement, Jeffrey is in charge of working to develop programs that emphasize community engagement and outreach for students. He created a unique program called Building Bridges that connects students of color to peer mentors. Building Bridges provides support for young students of color who are entering Gettysburg College and encourages them to get involved with

organizations like the Garthwait Leadership Center. Jeff developed the mentorship program in acknowledgement of the uncomfortable position that many students of color are put in on a predominantly white campus like Gettysburg's. He aims to provide a support system for students of color to ensure that they feel comfortable pursuing involvement in campus organizations in which they may be in a minority.

Jeff's extensive work as an RA has been an integral part of his experience here at Gettysburg. Initially, he was inspired to take on this position in order to try something different and be part of the lives of first-year students at the College. In his role as an RA, he focuses on advising students; here, Jeff makes an



important distinction between giving advice and advising. To him, giving advice means putting himself in a position of authority over others. So, when it comes to his duties as an RA, Jeff makes a conscious effort to advise first-years on a peer-to-peer level. He loves talking to his residents about their days, checking in with them to see how they are doing, and facilitating conversations that promote understanding and open questioning. To Jeff, his work is all about seeing a smile on somebody's face. He believes strongly that he learns from his residents even more than they learn from him.

His motivation to work for change comes from the idea of egalitarian reciprocity, or the sharing of ideas and culture on an even playing field. Jeff is keenly aware that there is a hierarchy of culture, in which some cultures are valued above others. While this hierarchy exists, there is only appropriation, not appreciation. Jeff relates this idea to his own identity as an African-American man who continually notices the dichotomy that occurs when others appreciate African-American culture but not African-American struggles. Relating to this idea of struggle, he wants to work for change so that we don't limit ourselves to only sharing the parts of our lives that are pretty; he wants everyone to be able to share themselves fully, including all of the difficult parts of life. Jeff is aware that nobody else is going to make this change for him – he has to make it happen. Jeff's inspiration to be a leader also comes from the need that he sees in the communities around him. He can't feel sorry for people and then not do anything about it. He firmly believes that he has to get on the front lines and produce change himself.

Above all, Jeff's faith guides him each and every day in his work. He keeps the words of the Scriptures close to his heart, fighting the good fight and pursuing righteousness. As Jeff says, he works every day to be the man and the leader that he has been called to be. He's been created for more than just himself; he's been created for a purpose. And to Jeff, what makes him fearless are the people and the God that he serves.

**Thank you for all of the fantastic work that you do, Jeff!**

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