



James W.C. Pennington Distinguished Fellowship

Honoring the first African American recipient of
an honorary doctorate from a European university



Call for Donations



“Germany stands high in our affections, not only on
account of her literary fame, but because of the fidelity
her sons have ever shown to the cause of human liberty.”

James W.C. Pennington (1809-1870)

James W.C. Pennington Distinguished Fellowship

Call for Donations

The Heidelberg Center for American Studies (HCA) and the Faculty of Theology at Heidelberg University are proud to announce the creation of a new fellowship honoring James W.C. Pennington, an African American churchman, abolitionist, and pacifist who holds a special place in the history of our university.

Born into slavery in Maryland, Pennington escaped bondage at the age of eighteen. He learned to read and write, and in 1834, became the first black man to attend classes at Yale University. Four years later, Pennington was ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church. His devotion to black freedom and non-violence made Pennington a cherished member of the international peace and abolitionist movements. At the 1849 World Peace Congress in Paris, Pennington befriended the Heidelberg theologian Friedrich Carové. Impressed with Pennington's courage and eloquence, Carové persuaded Heidelberg University in the same year to confer an honorary doctorate of divinity on the black minister. It was the first time that an African American received this greatest academic honor from a European university.

On the occasion of its six-hundred and twenty-fifth anniversary, Heidelberg University wishes to pay tribute to James W.C. Pennington's extraordinary life, thereby strengthening the ties that bind Germany's oldest university to the United States and the international academic community. Our goal is to raise a total of €125,000, or roughly \$175,000, to fund a fellowship that, for an initial period of five years, will enable one American or international graduate student annually to pursue his or her dissertation project in Heidelberg for one year.

Funds raised through this scholarship drive will be awarded to graduate students focusing on research topics that held a special resonance in James W.C. Pennington's career as a spiritual leader, intellectual, and activist: slavery, emancipation, peace, education, reform, civil rights, religion, and intercultural understanding. Preference will be given to research projects centering on U.S. history, transatlantic relations or the Atlantic world.

To honor the memory of James W.C. Pennington, we ask for your support in establishing the James W.C. Pennington Distinguished Fellowship at the HCA.

All donations are tax-deductible as permitted by law. Prospective donors may wish to note that the endowment for the fellowship needs to reach at least € 25,000, or roughly \$35,000, before the fellowship can be officially launched.

For the U.S.

Checks should be made out to Heidelberg University Association (with "Pennington Distinguished Fellowship" in the check's memo line) and mailed to Heidelberg University Association
Pennington Distinguished Fellowship
871 United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

For Europe

Verein zur Förderung der Schurman-Bibliothek e.V.
Baden-Württembergische Bank AG
Filiale Heidelberg
Account No. 712 1501 253
BLZ: 600 501 00
BIC: SOLADFST
IBAN: DE 29 6005 0101 7421 5012 53