

Black pastor leaves Southern Baptists over critical race theory

by [Yonat Shimron](#) in the [January 13, 2021](#) issue



(Courtesy photo)

A megachurch pastor pursuing a doctorate at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, announced in a published article on December 16 that he was withdrawing from his degree program and severing his church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention over a recent statement by its seminary presidents on critical race theory.

The move by Ralph D. West, founder and pastor of Church Without Walls in Houston, is evidence of more backlash against the November 30 statement by six SBC seminary presidents denouncing critical race theory and intersectionality.

The presidents, all six of them White men, issued the statement saying that critical race theory is "incompatible" with the denomination's central affirmation.

In his commentary in the Baptist Standard, West writes: "In this time, these men chose to castigate a framework that points out a truth that cannot be denied. American history has been tainted with racism. America codified it. And more, our public and private institutions propagated it."

Others have also criticized the seminary presidents' statement, pointing out that the SBC, founded in 1845 by Christians who believed that missionaries could own slaves, still cannot shake off its troubling racist past. (In 1995, the SBC formally apologized for slavery, saying, "we genuinely repent of racism of which we have been guilty.")

Critical race theory has come under fire in circles that reject the idea of systemic racism and find fault with the Black Lives Matter movement. In September, President Trump issued an executive order banning critical race theory from government-sponsored race and sex-based training.

The theory is used in many academic circles to explain how racial inequality cannot be understood apart from social, economic, and legal systems that benefit White interests.

In their statement, the seminary presidents did not explain how critical race theory clashes with the core beliefs of Southern Baptists.

West said that while he is keeping his affiliation with Baylor University, which is not affiliated with the SBC, he was withdrawing from Southwestern Seminary and severing any relationship between his church and the denomination. —Religion News Service

