

The Unveiling **Our Little known History**



Part 3: How Do We Right the Wrongs?

Recently many of us looked at our own alma mater's racial history and found sordid details. To return to our original question, what is the next logical step in the face of this knowledge?

Institutions have had mixed responses. Some have removed tributes to slavery such as statues, names of halls, endowed chairs; some have committed to educate on

the truth; some have given more scholarships to Black students, etc.

Few have been willing to actually part with their money. Virginia Theological Seminary stands out in this area: VTS has established a \$1.5 M endowed reparations fund, stating, "...we must start to **repair the material consequences of our sin** in the past." The income will go for purposes including "the particular needs of any descendants of enslaved persons that worked at the Seminary, the work of African American alumni/ae, especially in historic Black congregations, and other activities and programs that promote justice and inclusion..."

This seems a powerful step in the right direction. The wording, "**repair the material consequences of our sin,**" shows an understanding that the poverty and financial struggles African Americans experience *right now* are direct consequences of the sins of slavery and discrimination.

Thus, in 2019, Empower West, a black-white Louisville clergy alliance led by

SBTS alumni Reverend Kevin Cosby and Reverend Joe Phelps (Retired), appealed to SBTS to “make a global moral witness.” They requested the transfer of “a meaningful portion of SBTS’ financial wealth” to Simmons College of Kentucky, a black-led institution, as “an act of ‘repentance and repair’ to the descendants of slaves.”

DataUSA reports that in 2019, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary’s endowment was \$93.4M. That same year, Simmons’ reported endowment was just under \$1M. There is a reason Simmons College, founded by ex-slaves in Louisville within the same decade the Seminary opened here, has a tiny fraction of the endowment of the college founded by slaveholders and convict lessors. **One thrived from the free labor of the other. One preached for generations the inferiority of the other, negatively impacting their opportunities for growth, wealth, and success.** This is a chance to atone.

However, SBTS President Mohler responded to Empower West that he “and the trustees do not believe financial reparations are the appropriate response.” We disagree. We support Empower West’s call for the Seminary to make **reparation for the material consequences of their history.**

We also hope to see other colleges and universities (including our own) make real financial repair.