

ACSI Response Cheat Sheet:

Claim: *ACSI is not partnering with anyone who would preach “another” gospel.*

Reality: **ACSI is partnering with Walter Strickland.**

- Walter Strickland has written for ACSI’s blog on confronting “racial brokenness . . . deeply embedded into our personal assumptions and school programs.”¹
- Walter Strickland is speaking at ACSI’s Flourishing Schools Institute in Dallas, Texas, on June 18-28, 2021 according to their website.
- ACSI is partnering with UnifiED, which Walter Strickland directs.²

Reality: **Walter Strickland has preached another gospel.**

Walter Strickland, a Southern Baptist professor who is heavily influenced by liberation theology, attaches the work of liberation from systems of oppression to the gospel. In 2016, he told interviewer Lisa Fields that *The Cross and the Lynching Tree* by James Cone was a “beautiful monograph” she needed to read and “be blessed by.” He also described *Liberation and Reconciliation* by J. Deotis Roberts, which condemns the “Bible based gospel” and promotes the teachings of Sigmund Freud and Karl Marx as necessary for Black Theology, as his “favorite theological book of all time.”³ In both cases, Strickland endorsed the works of liberation theologians for how they improved his understanding of the gospel.

J. Deotis Roberts helped him see “the universal imperatives of the gospel” by imagining a more relatable Christ who appeared culturally as “whoever you are wherever you are.”⁴ James Cone introduced Strickland to the concept of “systemic sin” and opened his eyes “to the idea that Christ is trying to restore brokenness” by addressing issues like racial oppression. In an interview from 2018, sponsored by Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Strickland described James Cone as someone “who wanted to see social vitality of the gospel.” In light of Cone’s teaching, it was up to believers to “do the work of the social implications [or] the social outworkings of the gospel” which meant understanding “the brokenness of creation” and “fixing it.”⁵ In direct

¹ Walter Strickland and 2021, “Diversity in Christian Schools,” ACSI Blog, March 23, 2021, <https://blog.acsi.org/diversity-in-christian-schools>.

² “ACSI Partners with UnifiEd to Offer Christian Schools Resources on Cultural Intelligence,” ACSI, accessed April 9, 2021, <https://www.acsi.org/detail/news/2021/03/24/acsiunified>.

³ Walter Strickland, *The Balanced Scholar: The Life and Work of J. Deotis Roberts*, interview by Lisa Fields, October 14, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxqW-HQ8Fuc>.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Walter Strickland, *From the Lectern - E075 - Remembering James Cone; Part II*, interview by Courtlandt Perkins, October 28, 2018, <https://www.podbean.com/site/EpisodeDownload/PBC092792H4PE>; Walter Strickland, *From the Lectern - E074 - Remembering James Cone Part; I*, interview by Courtlandt Perkins, October 15, 2018, <https://www.podbean.com/site/EpisodeDownload/PBC092E0ZNVYE>; James Deotis Roberts, *Liberation and Reconciliation: A Black Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), xvii, 54.

contradiction to Jesus' teaching, Strickland even described "a summary of the gospel" as "to love God and neighbor," which Jesus clearly taught were actually the two commandments underlying the whole Law and the Prophets.⁶ For Walter Strickland, the gospel includes keeping the law.

During a panel discussion on race and justice in the wake of the civil unrest following George Floyd's death, Strickland claimed that American Christians, in order to justify slavery, constructed and passed down a "half gospel" which saved people's souls but neglected "the weighty matters of the law." Instead he advocated the "two parted reality of the gospel" which included accomplishing "justice." Such language is reminiscent of Social Gospel advocates like Richard Ely, who founded the Christian Social Union in 1891 and inspired Walter Rauschenbusch by arguing that "the church had forgotten the true gospel, which included a passion for social justice, and had come to focus solely on the 'one-sided half gospel' of individual salvation." Things like passing good laws and leading crusades against urban living conditions were part of "social salvation."⁷ Of course, Ely was also an early progressive who supported eugenics and believed in racial hierarchy, positions which modern progressives reject.⁸ Nevertheless, the perception by social justice advocates from Ely to Strickland, that the gospel preached in most evangelical churches is somehow incomplete without the command to work toward social justice, saturates the language of many leaders in evangelical organizations.

In Strickland's mind, Martin Luther King Jr. was "orthodox" and the ideas of liberation theologians like James Cone and J. Deotis Roberts can help evangelicals complete their incomplete gospel.⁹

Claim: For the reasons indicated below, the allegation that Dr. Strickland is a proponent of CRT is false.

Reality: Dr. Strickland preaches key aspects of liberation theology.

Reality: Dr. Strickland supports the use of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as Analytical Tools.

- Walter Strickland was on the committee which drafted a resolution "On Critical Race Theory And Intersectionality" in 2019. The document stated, "these analytical tools can

⁶ Matt 22:35-40.

⁷ Steven Piott, *American Reformers, 1870-1920: Progressives in Word and Deed* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 79-80.

⁸ Clifford Thies and Ryan Daza, "Richard T. Ely: The Confederate Flag of the AEA?," *Econ Journal Watch* 8, no. 2 (May 2011), 149-151.

⁹ Walter Strickland, "Liberation and Black Theological Method: A Historical Analysis" (University of Aberdeen, 2017), 115.
https://abdn.alma.exlibrisgroup.com/discovery/delivery/44ABE_INST:44ABE_VU1/12153191280005941?lang=en.

- aid in evaluating a variety of human experiences.”¹⁰
- Dr. Strickland draws heavily on Critical Race Theorists in his 2017 thesis on “Liberation and Black theological method.” For example, he cites Richard Delgado’s *Critical Race Theory: An Introduction 2nd Edition* to claim that black women’s needs were not properly met by the Civil Rights movement because of their “intersectionality” and that “race is socially constructed.”¹¹

Claim: According to the Colson Center, Critical Race Theory descends from European and North American philosophical traditions, particularly Marxism and Postmodernism. Like these worldviews of its intellectual ancestry, CRT sees the world in terms of power dynamics. In this way of thinking, social evils such as poverty, crime, or oppression result not from universal human frailties but from European-Americans intent on securing and increasing their economic and social power. Based on this metanarrative, equality and justice demand CRT sees members of the oppressed group as morally right, and members of the oppressor group as morally wrong, privileging the stories of those kept out of power.

Reality: ACSI’s definition fails to mention how interest convergence leads to hidden systemic racism and how standpoint epistemology plays a pivotal role in diagnosing race related problems.

Claim: The New York Times previously published an article containing several inaccuracies and is the primary source being used to falsely allege that Dr. Strickland is preaching a false gospel, that he supports James Cone, considered the father of Black Liberation Theology, and that he supports Critical Race Theory.

Reality: The New York Times has NOT been the primary source used to describe Dr. Strickland’s dangerous views.

See:

Walter Strickland, The Balanced Scholar: The Life and Work of J. Deotis Roberts, interview by Lisa Fields, October 14, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vxqW-HQ8Fuc>.

Walter Strickland, From the Lectern - E075 - Remembering James Cone; Part II, interview by Courtlandt Perkins, October 28, 2018, <https://www.podbean.com/site/EpisodeDownload/PBC092792H4PE>

Walter Strickland, From the Lectern - E074 - Remembering James Cone Part; I, interview by Courtlandt Perkins, October 15, 2018, <https://www.podbean.com/site/EpisodeDownload/PBC092E0ZNVYE>

¹⁰ “On Critical Race Theory And Intersectionality” SBC, June 1, 2019, <https://www.sbc.net/resource-library/resolutions/on-critical-race-theory-and-intersectionality/>.

¹¹ Strickland, “Liberation and Black Theological Method: A Historical Analysis,” 109, 123.

Cultural Diversity & Hermeneutics Panel, (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mA8b1yE8VVM>

Walter Strickland, An Honest Conversation on Race and Justice, Jun 17, 2020
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O6InpM_Ruo

Walter Strickland, An Honest Conversation About Race and Justice (The Urban Perspective, 2020), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5O6InpM_Ruo

How to Shepherd Your Church Through Racial Injustice, (Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2019)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWCdg53Xtq4&t=2847s>

Claim: Please watch this sermon by Dr. Strickland: Salvation Through Christ Alone; it clearly establishes his theological foundation and commitment to the inerrancy of Scripture; it refutes the allegations that he is preaching a false gospel, or advancing black liberation theology, or condones Critical Race Theory.

Reality: The Galatian heresy consisted of a true gospel with a mechanism for works righteousness added to it. One can articulate a true gospel and then inconsistently add to it thus creating what the Apostle Paul called a “different Gospel.”