

Ruby Bridges visits with the President and Her Portrait

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I think it's fair to say that if it hadn't been for you guys, I might not be here and we wouldn't be looking at this together, so...

RUBY BRIDGES: Just having him say that meant a lot to me and it always has. But to be standing shoulder to shoulder with history and viewing history -- it's just once in a lifetime.

The painting depicts my walk into William Franz School, integrating the public school systems in 1960.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Can you still put your head back into these times?

RUBY BRIDGES: Oh, can I. Absolutely.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Still -- you can still kind of go back there?

RUBY BRIDGES: Definitely; yes. And I do. Every day.

The girl in that painting at six years old knew absolutely nothing about racism -- I was going to school that day. But the lesson that I took away that year, in an empty school building, was that none of us know anything about disliking one another when we come into the world. It is something that is passed on to us.

So every time I see that, I think about the fact that I was an innocent child that knew absolutely nothing about what was happening that day. But then I learned a very valuable lesson, and that is, is that we should never look at a person and judge them by the color of their skin. That's the lesson I learned in first grade.