

From *Fire On The Bayou: True Tales From The Civil Rights Battlefield*
Howard L. Feinstein (Foxhead Books: 2013):

The legacy of the civil rights struggle is a profound one for the nation, with many concrete and potential beneficiaries. One theory – and there is considerable evidence to support it – holds that no one profited more from the end of legalized segregation than the southern white population. The end of violent confrontations brought at least some semblance of stability to the region, paving the way for much-needed outside business investment and the beginning of the end of the South as an underdeveloped country in our midst. On a local level, many a merchant profited nicely by being “forced” to serve all customers, and municipalities saved many dollars previously devoted to needlessly duplicative segregated facilities.

On a grander scale, the movement’s triumphs set a shining example for other groups seeking their right to pursue the American dream. Few, if any, people were ever as historically demonized and disenfranchised as African Americans – yet they slew Goliath and cast off their chains, at least the legal ones. What an indelible message for their brothers and sisters: if you’re of Hispanic or Asian heritage, you don’t have to muffle your native language or be ashamed to celebrate your cultural holidays. If you’re a young schoolgirl, you can grow up to be anything you want to be, not just the traditional “women’s occupations.” If you’re gay, you don’t have to spend your life in denial, cowering in the darkness of the closet. If you use a wheelchair, you can still attend that concert, that ballgame, or that presidential inauguration. *This is your country too.*

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“What makes our country great is that our membership is based not on our bloodline, not on what we look like, or what our last names are; it’s not based on where our parents or grandparents came from, or how recently they arrived, but on adherence to a common creed: that all of us are created equal.”

- Barack Obama, 2019