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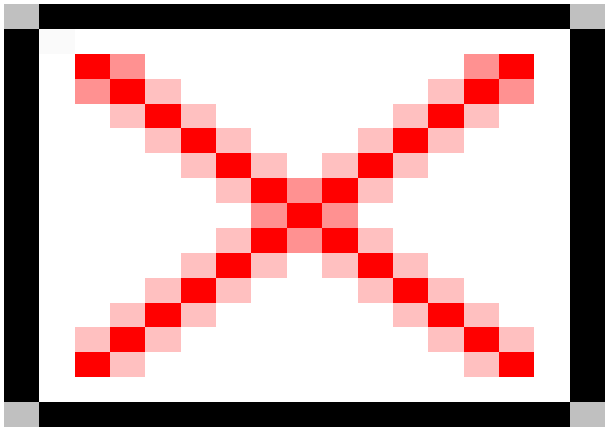
LGBT History Month: 10 Feet Tall

Oct. 26, 2012 ? Emery Cohen

October is LGBT History Month[1], so we asked GSA leaders who, in Equality Forum's archive of LGBT icons[2], inspires them. Below Emery Cohen, a senior from San Mateo, CA, describes his how icon Allen Ginsberg has impacted him.



Allen Ginsberg came out of the closet in a big way. Publishing his sexuality for all to read and speaking quite frankly about his loves and lovers, he startled the world.

I am a student who sits in the back row of the classroom. My voice is not always audible, and my confidence is not always visible, or even existent. Ginsberg is an inspiration to me because his speech was loud, it was proud, and it was raw.

Ginsberg wrote and performed obscene odes that could have gotten someone ?expelled from the academy for crazy? (*Howl And Other Poems*, 1956). I like to think this was autobiographical writing. He was a man, a gay man, before his time. He told truths that others were too afraid to say. He sang lyrics that ears were not prepared to hear. But Ginsberg pushed those people out of their comfort zones, and into a new generation: The Beat Generation. I idolize his courage and strong sense of self. I am someone whose sexuality and gender identity is fluid and contrary to society's expectations. Ginsberg was courageous enough to squash these expectations, as I hope to one day do.

When I first began to read *Howl*, my favorite work of his, I found myself entranced by his words. I immediately wanted to be him. I wanted his bravery, his courage, his heart, and his literary genius. In fact, I wanted the entirety of his genius. That is why dream of going to New York one day, and maybe even Columbia. For me to even get to trace the steps of legends like Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac would make me feel ten feet tall.

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Links:
[1] http://www.lgbthistorymonth.com
[2] http://www.lgbthistorymonth.com/icon_search/all