Published on *Gay-Straight Alliance Network* (http://www.gsanetwork.org)

Gay High School Swim Captain Makes A Splash Standing Up For Rights

It has been one year since I raised my hand in a U.S. history class during a lecture on gay rights, and came out as gay to 40 of my peers and my favorite teacher.

My coming out in class was spontaneous and a fortunate timing of events. I was looking for a way to come out to everyone, and coincidentally, we were learning about the counter-conformity of the 1960s, including gay rights. When a slide popped up that mentioned Stonewall and that many people were coming out at this time, I shot up my hand and said, "I think I'll take this opportunity to come out, and say that I'm gay." My classmates clapped and cheered and high-fived, and it all worked out perfectly.

As the bell rang shortly thereafter, and I ran out of the classroom, I was out, with the weight of the world seemingly lifted from my shoulders. The hesitation of awkward individual conversations and the worries about who knew and who needed to know were gone. I was out and I was ecstatic. One year stronger, I look back on that moment of spontaneity and smile with increased confidence. While that history class may have been the most defining moment of my coming out, the smaller, yet equally meaningful, moments have led me to become the out and proud person I am today.

The moments that have shaped me are the simple ones. They are times like the night when I was first asked if I were gay, sparking the contemplation of my sexuality for the first time, or the realization that there were other people out there like me as I read about lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender athletes on Outsports. It is like the time I came out to my dad while maneuvering the family's SUV down a rural Utah highway at 80 miles per hour that have given me the courage I need, or, maybe it was figuring out that being gay was actually the simplest thing in the world, that everyone is coming out as something, and that I had been gay all along. The memories I will carry with me are the days spent knocking on doors with Equality California in Eastern Los Angeles, using my four years of high school Spanish to talk to families about the right to equal marriage.

It is the pride of marching through the streets of Sacramento, California's capital, with the GSA

Network chanting, "We are the queer youth, the mighty, mighty queer youth," on our way to the Capitol to lobby lawmakers for safer schools for all students. Or it was coming out to my swim coach after beating my personal record in the 100 butterfly and nearly bringing our team to victory at our city final competition, and her saying that she really doesn't care who anyone is kissing as long we?re swimming fast and having fun.

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