



My Coming Out Story

June 8, 2016 By [Ashton P. Woods](#)

I remember it like yesterday, I was in the seventh grade when I privately started to acknowledge, in my mind that I was gay. I was going to a little magnet school called “The New Orleans Free School” and it was a school where a kid could be a kid, learn and grow. It was here that I had my first pubescent crushes, and battled with whether or not I believed in God. On one hand I was being raised by my grandmother who is a Jehovah’s Witness and one thing about the Witnesses is that my sexual orientation is not in line with their teachings or ideals. On the other hand I struggled with what people told me what my belief system should be vs my own independent thoughts that I do not believe in any God. It was a dual battle to believe and be straight, two things that have never been good at and never will be LOL! Anyway, I was having a conversation at recess with my favorite teacher Mary Garton, was not only a great teacher, but a strong woman in her own right. The few things that I remember about this conversation is that it was a warm and sunny day in New Orleans and Mary, a classmate and I were talking about random societal issues (yes we were pretty advanced). During that conversation I blurted out, “I think that I might be gay...” and then the conversation continued with a thoughtful acknowledgement of my statement. That day turned out to be a precursor to when I would actually come out as gay and the way my life would change.

One day, during my freshman year at McMinn I read in the local paper that one of the teachers at my school had come out as gay in the interview that he had with them. That teacher turned out to be Marco Menghini a Spanish teacher, he was brave enough to allow the paper to list his phone number in article. That very same day I called him to tell him that he had my support and we talked for a few minutes, not knowing what drove me to call him, I felt a calling to do it. The conversation ended with an invitation to meet in his classroom with a small group of students to discuss creating a Gay/Straight alliance on campus. When the day came to meet in his classroom, there was a lot of anticipation on my part, I was curious to know who the other students were and what they would be like. So, during the lunch period I headed to the meeting and there stood the folks that I would come to be friends with to this day...

That day we came up with the name “Student Alliance For Equality” or S.A.F.E and recorded a video introduction for the morning announcements. We ironed out a script for those who would speak and when the camera started to roll something weird happened. The person who was supposed to say his lines froze in fear, understandable considering the circumstances. For some reason, I remembered lines and stepped forward to recite...to continue reading [the original post, visit my \[S!N\] blog...](#)

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