

CONSTANCE McMILLEN

b. 1992

YOUTH ACTIVIST

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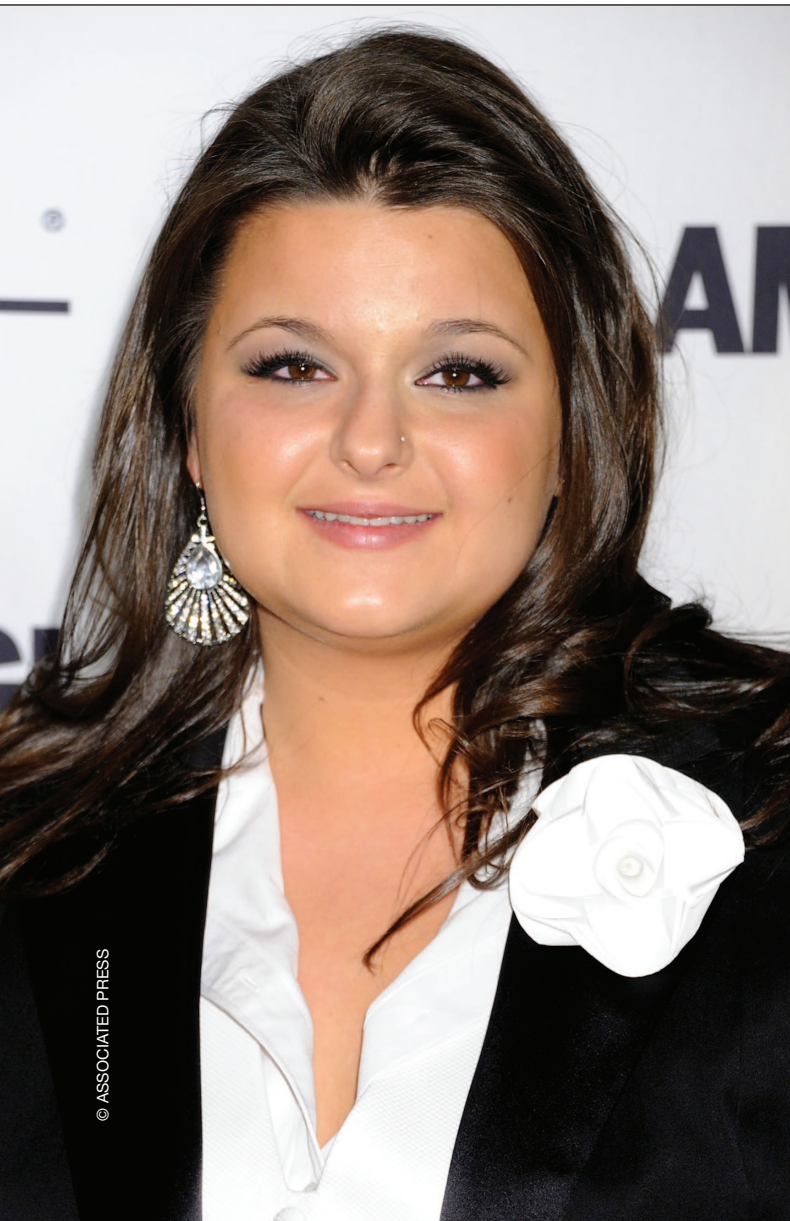
She appeared on national television shows including "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," where she received a \$30,000 scholarship.

"Stand up like I did. It was hard but it was worth it."

Constance McMillen became a poster child for LGBT rights after asking permission to bring her girlfriend to the prom. When her school responded by cancelling the prom, McMillen took legal action.

As a senior at Itawamba Agricultural High School in Fulton, Mississippi, McMillen challenged the prom rules forbidding same-sex couples from attending and girls from wearing tuxedos. When the school cancelled the prom, students responded by harassing McMillen.

The ACLU filed a lawsuit requesting that the court order the school to hold an inclusive prom. The case was settled when a U.S. District Court ruled that McMillen's First Amendment rights had been violated. The Itawamba County School District consented to a judgment in which it paid McMillen \$35,000 and \$81,000 in attorneys' fees.



After the settlement, the school held a prom. Only McMillen and seven learning disabled students attended. Parents organized a separate prom that all other students attended, but to which McMillen was not invited.

The school district agreed to implement policies that would prevent future discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity for extracurricular and educational activities. This was groundbreaking for a Mississippi school district.

McMillen's story received national attention. Glamour magazine named her Woman of the Year Award in 2010, and she appeared on national television shows including "The Ellen DeGeneres Show," where she received a \$30,000 scholarship. She was invited to the White House and served as Grand Marshal of the New York Gay Pride Parade.

McMillen transferred to a school in Jackson, Mississippi, and graduated in 2011. She enrolled at Northeast Mississippi Community College to study psychology.