

RACISM

continued from page 4C

erson has become a school where everyone feels included. In order for the concept to work, Ansari said it's vital to create awareness and have zero tolerance for harassment.

While the racism-free zone may be her most prominent service now, Ansari, 55, has carried the torch for many social causes. Her desire to reshape a world full of inequalities was ignited when she witnessed a race riot at Jackson State University in Mississippi when she was 11 years old. Ansari, who grew up just outside of Chicago, said she told herself she had to do something about it.

"I was always a fighter," she said. "I was always a person who didn't believe in people being treated with disrespect."

Her recognition of the rift between black and white deepened when she attended a predominantly white high school. There, she had to contend with racial slurs and with teachers who had no real interest in her academic ambitions.

"You can't be a nurse," she said the teachers told her. "Black folks can't be nurses."

"I never could understand why, due to the color of my skin, people thought I was different."

In the years after high school, her social activism flourished as she took on everything from women's rights to housing issues in Chicago. When she lived in New Mexico she immersed herself in more work for women, black farmers' rights and Native American rights. In Eugene, she not only started the racism-free zone, but also worked for the city as human rights commissioner until earlier this year. She said she also started the first citywide Martin Luther King Celebration in 1986.

"The universe carried me to a lot of people who'd been struggling," she said.

City of Eugene Human Rights Pro-



Bahati Ansari has dubbed her office at Jefferson Middle School a "racism-free zone."

Jessica Waters
Photo Editor

gram Manager Greg Rikhoff has known Ansari for almost 20 years and said the strong, energetic, humor-filled woman is committed to human rights in all aspects of her life.

"Her life is not separated into what she does for a living and what she does for human rights," he said. "It's all seamless."

He added that Ansari had continued to show everyone they all have a stake in creating an equitable and caring community.

"She's really done a remarkable job of showing how interconnected we are," Rikhoff said. "You can't work on race and ignore issues of disability and you can't talk of women's rights and ignore ageism."

Ansari said it's a big challenge to educate people and build inclusive communities. Oregon's history is heavily marked by its exclusion of blacks. And while Eugene prides itself in its "liberalism," Ansari said there are many issues that people still have to rally for.

"They think that it's OK, but it's not," she said.

Retired University Professor Edwin Coleman, a staunch social activist who has worked with Ansari many times, agreed, saying that the civil rights movement is not over.

"You must always remember and keep going because we as Americans, and especially we as African-Americans, are not free," he said.

Coleman said Ansari has availed

herself to a lot of issues in a variety of ways.

"She's continually working for the betterment of all people, not just people of color," he said.

While her work for others gives her great pride, Ansari believes one of her greatest accomplishments is raising her two sons. She also has five grandchildren. She said she is concerned about the future of black youth, especially with so many young black men in penal institutions.

"I think it's atrocious," she said. "More of them are in the institutions than in college over things that the average person wouldn't go into institutions for."

Ansari said she isn't about to slow down. She still has dreams. She wants to go back to school for a graduate degree and she wants to build a retreat center where people who have experienced persecution can heal. She also wants to skydive and learn how to fly.

"I'm still growing," she said. "Every day I wake up and say, 'What am I going to do now?'"

She says her belief in herself has allowed her to envision and work for what she wants.

"Love yourself first," she said. "When you do that you command that out of others."

Contact the news editor at ayishayahya@dailyemerald.com.

- Homemade Soups
- Fresh Salads
- Fresh Pizza • Hamburgers
- Fish & Chips • Pastas • Ribs
- Microbrewed Beer and full bar
- Homemade Root Beer

199 E. 5th • Eugene • 686-2739 • www.steelheadbrewingco.com

For Over **70** YEARS

Save on Oregon's Best Photofinishing

Professional Grade Developing and Printing
Custom Enlarging
Digital Services
Same-Day E6 Slide Processing
Framing and Matting
"We Sell Photography--Not Just Cameras"

\$5 off 36 exp.
Developing & Printing C41 Color Print Film

\$3 off 24/27 exp.

\$2 off 12 exp.

dotson's
MAKING EXPERTS FOR OVER 70 YEARS
Coupon must accompany order Expires Oct. 10

gerlachs

Campus Camera Center
849 E. 13th between the Bookstore and Starbucks
Also available at Dotsons on Willamette and Gerlachs in the Centennial Shopping Center

Want to COACH youth football?

BE an OUTDOOR SCHOOL COUNSELOR?
Help out at the BOYS & GIRLS CLUB?

YOU CAN DO ALL THIS AND EARN UPPER DIVISION CREDIT!

Come visit us today! In the EMU • 346-4351 • intern@darkwing.uoregon.edu

CIP

Community Internship Program

916910

You're always close to campus. www.dailyemerald.com