

CITIZEN SAM

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to resign was disappointing, I had to be respectful of everybody's response [in January 2009, Adams admitted lying to the media about an affair he'd had with a young state legislative intern, leading to a public outcry which included some of Portland's LGBTQ community].

JO: Two failed recall attempts and you're still the mayor. What does that say about Portland?

SA: I think Portlanders are fair-minded people. That's another reason I am so bonded with this city. Even before I ran for office — we're not perfect, no city is perfect — time and time again I saw this city rally around what is fair, what is right, and do so in a progressive way that other cities might aspire to, but do not deliver on as often as Portland does.

JO: What has been your proudest moment as mayor?

SA: I am most proud of my work on education. There are very few panaceas in life, but a good education is pretty darn close. If you're better educated, you make more money. You'll be healthier. If you have an education, the numbers show you'll be happier. Education comes in many ways: skills training, entrepreneurial risk, college, but not just college, by any means.

There are four kids in my own family. Two dropped out of high school, and two of us graduated. So I've personally seen behind the statistic of a high school drop out, watching my siblings suffer mightily. So, I know education is good for the city, but for me it's also personal.

When you come from a hardscrabble or poor background, it's really hard to get through school. It's really hard if your parents are doing what they can to stay afloat, but they're not there emotionally, or even physically, to encourage you through inevitable tough times. I've seen what happens to very smart people who drop out of high school, and don't go on to get a trade or skill, or get to college.

So, we've had a major uptick in high school graduations, after four years of concerted effort with our Future Connect program, and after All Hands Raised, which is the new county-wide foundation for all the school districts in the city, plus enhancing our scholarship program, and doubling summer school. These things are about human potential and human infrastructure, so that young people can meet their full potential. And, we've done all this in a way that does not depend on a mayor for its future success. It's built into the community, institutionalized in the public and private sectors, and inculcated in the community. That's what I'm most proud of, because all of that will live on long after I'm gone.

JO: What does your gut say? Will we have marriage equality in 2014?

SA: Yes! I think so. I think that Oregonians are coming to realize that marriage strengthens society for everyone. Loving couples who have legal support and legal rights strengthen every community in the state, and there are LGBTQ couples in every one of Oregon's 36 counties. We will be a stronger state when marriage is available for everyone.

JO: What does Portland need to do better?

SA: Our Achilles' heel is that, as great a city as we are, our "greatness" is not accessible to everybody. We're not living up to our progressive values when it comes to equity. When you compare Portlanders of color to Seattleites of color and San Franciscans of color, and you look at the economic and academic disparities that have existed in all three cities; in Seattle and San

Francisco they've gotten more equal, while in Portland we've gotten less equal. So that's our biggest challenge.

Our second biggest challenge is that we need to continue strengthening the economy for everybody. Our quality of life is not matched by our quality of economy. So, my service as Portland's mayor has been focused on the "meat and potatoes" of business development. It's not sexy work, but helping local business expand, succeed, and export around the world is what we need. Recruiting other businesses where we have gaps in our economics and ecosystem is what we need. So, I've focused a lot of work on that. It's hard work. It takes a lot of time and a lot of patience. It's behind the scenes work, because every company wants their secrets kept for proprietary reasons.

Our City Council report on economic development strategy, though, shows this hard work pays off. Our goal is to double our exports in the next five years, and we can do that. What's imagined and designed and made in Portland is unmatched in terms of products and services around the world.

JO: What would you say to other elected officials about the experience you've had working with the transgender community, and Portland's efforts towards equity for this community?

I expect the next mayor to be a huge champion of marriage equality.

SA: I am very passionate about this issue, because we are all unique. If you are lucky enough to grow old, you will probably experience age discrimination at some point. Issues of equity and fairness should matter to everyone.

The transgender community has been marginalized even within the lesbian and gay rights movement. [Longtime leading local transgender activist] Lori Buckwalter really educated me. She was just a great gal. She and her partner and I would go to coffee or something, because I wanted to get educated. And, the amount of abuse that they used to take just walking down the street was so shameful and so hurtful ... I felt embarrassed that in this city I love so much some would say such incredibly nasty and hurtful things to Lori and her partner.

So I am very proud of our work to provide opportunities and equity, including transgender healthcare benefits, here in Portland. I can't believe that so few cities in the U.S. do that. This needs to change. I'm also very proud that when the Portland Police Bureau did an "It Gets Better" video,

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