

**SAADAT, from page 4**

it sound like a program where all you had to do was be a person of color and you'd get a job. And I would challenge them and say, well why aren't all of us working? Why is the unemployment rate among blacks and Latinos so high if it's that way?

Also, people have used affirmative action to say that it's a special right given to people. People who say that are people who have so little understanding of history, so little knowledge of history that they don't know that Thomas Jefferson, while an advocate for freedom, also had a slave as his mistress and had several children by her and never set her free. This advocate for freedom owned people. They don't know that the government had a policy of non-integrated

neighborhoods, so when the men came back from World War II and wanted to get loans for housing, the government policy was that they wouldn't grant those loans in places where there would be integrated living. When you don't know that, it's easy to have a knee-jerk reaction to something like affirmative action.

Again, it's a tool. It's a tool by which you measure the extent to which the institution or the agency has been

able to try and equalize its workforce, not only in terms of people of color and women. It's never been people of color who have been the biggest beneficiaries, it's always been white women, not black women. So when you look at where those people are placed in the hierarchy of any place, you should be able to see some sort of reasonable disbursement of color and gender or ethnicity in the dimensions of that organization. You use it as a tool.

**J.T.:** So affirmative action is a measuring tool?

**K.S.:** It's a monitoring tool.

**J.T.:** What sort of standard should it be used to meet?

**K.S.:** That's a really complicated issue and that's another place where people don't

know very much. The standard has to do with the availability of people in a particular field. Let's see if you can follow this. If the city wants to hire engineers, and we find that we don't have any American Indian engineers we need to find out how many are available to us. What if there aren't any coming out of engineering school? But when we do find out that there is an American Indian engineering society we can find out how many are available to us, and we can go to universities and go all around and find out how many are coming on the marketplace and make some focused efforts to recruit. The standards are what is available in the area. It could be the local area. It could be the region, the state, the country. It could be international. What are the standards has to do with what's available.

**J.T.:** Because affirmative action has become such a loaded term, should we use different language?

**K.S.:** No. We can't keep changing the language and think that will solve the problem. It just means you'll have a new set of words with a negative load. We don't need to change the language. Let's get educated about what it really means.

**J.T.:** So how is the city doing?

**K.S.:** The city's doing pretty good. We still have some places we need to look and work harder, but we have internal discussions and we have an affirmative action plan. We have an Office of Equity that will look at those plans and look at those agencies and look at their internal processes and procedures to see if they can be either support or obstacles for equity in the work place.

**J.T.:** What could it be doing better?

**K.S.:** [Pause] It could be doing a better job of promoting itself as an employer interested in issues of equity and equal opportunity. It could have signs on the sides of buses saying, your city: the place to work.

**J.T.:** I was hoping we could reminisce a little bit. You say a lot of people are ignorant of history. Portland is regarded as a relatively friendly place for gay rights, but long ago it wasn't. You were involved with the campaign against Measure 9 and helped organize Portland's first gay rights march. What was that like?

**K.S.:** Scary. The march was less than 200 people, and we marched in downtown Portland and we were scared to death. The religious right was there with a big sign

saying, turn or burn. And they came and they stood in the midst of the group celebrating gay rights.

While it's been, in some ways, a haven for gay and lesbian people, it hasn't been all sweetness. Ballot Measure 9 and before it Ballot Measure 8 rescinded then Governor Neil Goldschmidt's executive order for nondiscrimination in state government. Ballot Measure 9 was an amazing piece of work to be presented to the people in this state about what people's rights are. It said that you couldn't even be friends with or support someone who was gay. That's pretty awful.

I believe that the people who do this are as adamant about their beliefs as I am about mine. But I believe, ultimately, the problem is that each of us in a marginalized group has to fight our way into the human race via the courts, etc. That should not be. There should be no vote on whether or not I get to have equal rights. All that does is allow people to vote their existing prejudices. If I am a citizen here and I pay my taxes and vote, and I do vote, what is the issue? Who gets to say that I don't get to have what other people have? How does that happen?

Well go back to the Constitution. Have a look. The constitution of South Africa protects me as a black person, as a lesbian person, as a woman. How come that isn't true in the U.S.?

**J.T.:** How come?

**K.S.:** Go back to the Constitution. It was written biased. Derrick Bell, who is now dead, who was the dean of the University of Oregon law school, raised that issue. Our Constitution was written for straight, white, land-owning men. It wasn't written for even poor white men. But everybody who has wanted full participation in our country has had to fight their way into legitimacy because we were not included in the first place. That's why.

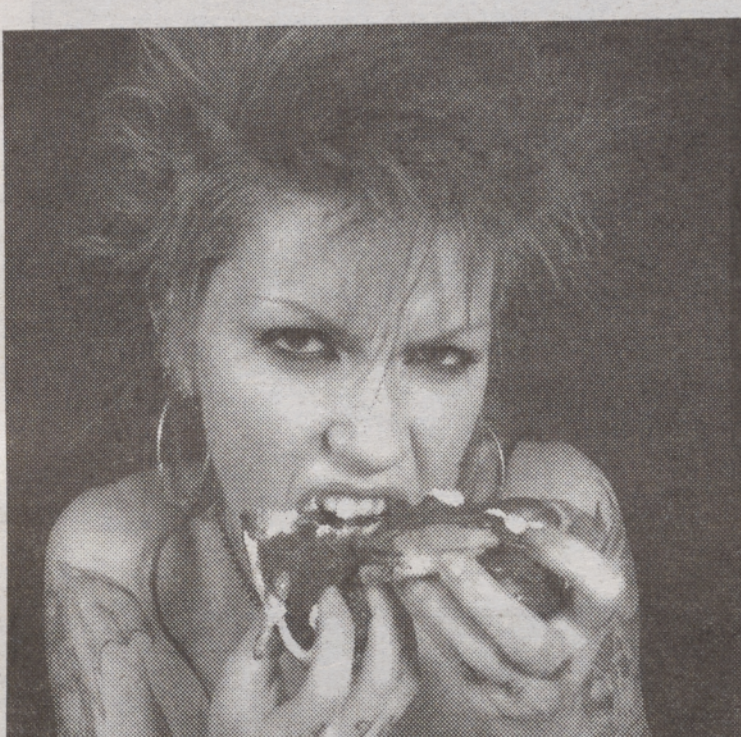
Why would this ridiculous conversation with women getting raped, and legitimate rape happen? How the hell did that happen? And it's not the women talking about it, it's the men deciding. And it's the men deciding about what men do to women. It's insane. It should make everybody in this country crazy. Why the hell do we have to vote on whether or not women get to have an abortion? That's not anyone's business but her's.

**J.T.:** What are you going to do in retirement?

**K.S.:** Raise hell.

Looking forward, Saadat says she hopes to address the crimes of human trafficking. "It is abominable. It is slavery. It is the abuse of children," she says.

**But there's a piece that we don't touch very well, and that's the personal piece. ... That's the piece that requires that I do some sort of acceptance of the reality of the history of this country as it has treated people of color and women as it has treated the mentally ill and the physically disabled. There is a history there that we refuse to acknowledge because we absolve ourselves of any responsibility.**



**VOODOO DOUGHNUT**

THE MAGIC IS IN THE HOLE!

22 SW 3RD & BURNSIDE  
1501 NE DAVIS

OPEN 24/7!

SUPPORTING STREET ROOTS SINCE 2003



**DETOUR**  
cafe

3035 S.E. Division • Portland, OR 97202  
503.234.7499

Many thanks to all of our volunteers who contribute their time and energy toward Street Roots! Inquire about volunteering at [www.streetroots.org/volunteer](http://www.streetroots.org/volunteer).