

# Saviz Shafaie



**1950-2000**

**As a university student in 1972, Shafaie, baffled by sociological questions surrounding sexual orientation, delivered a pioneering research speech, an investigative look at the treatment given same sex love that was prevalent in Iranian social patterns. Expecting a small turnout, Shafaie was astounded when several hundred of his peers at the University of Shiraz gathered to hear him.**

**In 1976, pursuing his education, Shafaie arrived in the United States, where he continued his studies of sexuality and gender. At Syracuse University, he gradually became involved with the growing gay and lesbian liberation movement. He finally emerged – as a result of a conscious and deliberate decision – as an openly gay man, all the while earning his master's degree in sociology.**

**Moving to Orlando, Florida in the early 1980s, Shafaie turned his personal evolution into a series of ongoing political statements. He was quick to see that various social crusades – including the peace movement, the anti-sexist men's movement, the feminist cause, as well as racial, ethnic, and human rights concerns could be linked. He took an active part in these various movements, successfully urging – in the Orlando area – that they support civil rights and social acceptance of those who, like himself, felt strong emotional and sexual bonds with individuals of their own gender.**

**Shafaie opened a natural foods store (Power House), located in Winter Park, where he provided materials relevant to the aforementioned causes, including gay and lesbian rights. He organized demonstrations and educational events, appearing on TV and radio, and receiving Central Florida's Spectrum Award (1995) for his efforts at promoting a meaningful recognition of diversity among the area's citizens. Again, on March 9, 1997, he received both the Spectrum Male Activist and Male Role Model Award.**