

Question Script for NJ Women's Voices Interview

1) What is your:

- Name? Patricia Powell
- Age? I am thirty-nine years old.
- Education Level? Doctorate JD
- Current Profession? I am a school business administrator.
- Marital Status? I am married.
- Race/Ethnicity? Caucasian
- Hometown/where were you born? Bridgeton, NJ
- Political Affiliation? I'm a Democrat.
- Religion? (Or, would you consider yourself a religious/spiritual person?) I am religious and I am Catholic.
- Relationship to me (the interviewer)? My father is a board member at the school where she is the business administrator. I also previously attended that school.

2) Do you have children? (How many? What ages/genders?)

I have one child, a boy. He is four years old.

3) What do you know about feminism? Do you consider yourself a feminist? Why or why not? If you wouldn't call yourself a feminist, is there another term that better describes you?

Well, I know feminism is about equal opportunity for women. For me to call myself a feminist, I'd have to know what an actual definition of feminism was though. Since it's mainly about activism, I wouldn't technically be a feminist because I am not actively involved in feminist movements but I do believe that women should have the same opportunities and equal rights as men. Therefore, you could call me a believer in equality.

4) What do you think of the media's portrayal of the ideal female body? Does it impact your own perception of your body? How or why not?

The media's portrayal of the female body is horrible. It is just unattainable, it's an unattainable body. A body of perfection in the eyes of the media, not perfection in the eyes of the human. And it does make women and girls feel bad about their bodies. Me, it made me feel bad when I was younger, yes. Now, I know that the media's body is not real. People do not have those bodies. I remember watching a show in which Lauren Hutton explained how much they stretched and cut her photos to make her body look the way they wanted. The media has a terrible effect on young girls, which I do believe leads to so many eating disorders today.

5) As a child were you ever told you couldn't do something simply because you were a girl? What was the situation? Were you ever told you couldn't be what you wanted to be when you grew up because you were a girl? If yes, who told you that and why? If no, who encouraged you to be whatever you wanted to be?

No, I can honestly say I have been very lucky. I was always told by my mother and teachers that I would go far and succeed. Everyone always had great expectations for me and no one ever thought that because I was a girl I wouldn't do as well. My high school teachers knew I'd do well. When I got to college, my computer professor kept telling me that I am great with computers; I should really go into that field because it's opening up for women. The same thing was said by my economics professor, business/law professor, and accounting professor. I only had positive things said to me as I grew up. If all girls and children alike received this same inspiration and belief that they will amount to great things, everyone would be successful.

6) As a woman do you feel pressured to be successful in the fields of family/home life, business/work life, income *and* appearance? What defines a successful woman in your mind? What factors influence your opinion of what defines a successful woman? Has your understanding of success changed over the years?

Yes, I do feel a pull, or pressure, between my job responsibilities and the responsibilities I have for my son and family. As for appearance, I don't think I know a woman who isn't somewhat concerned with her appearance. For me though, it's the job/home issues that pressure me the most. To every woman, success is different. I can define success for myself, but not for women as a whole. In my own life, success for me was at first work, climbing the ladder in my career, and making more money. Then I got married and now success is not just work. Success for me is also having a successful, healthy marriage and having my child do well. After all, his success reflects how successful I have been in teaching and raising him. My understanding of success has most definitely changed over the years because now my number one definition of success is how my son does. He's my primary definition of success because he reflects me and I can only give him everything he needs to be successful in life if I am successful in my job. I have to be successful at work to give him all the opportunities he needs to have his own success. To everyone, I believe success would be the goals you set for yourself.

- 7) As an adult do you ever feel that you are treated differently due to your gender? How so? Do you like being treated differently because you are a woman or would you prefer it didn't happen? Does it depend on the situation? Please explain.

Yes, I have been treated differently because I am a woman, definitely. This happened more so when I was a lawyer than now. When I worked at a law firm, I worked with all men and you could definitely see how they acted differently because I was there and because I was a woman. They felt they needed to be different to accommodate me. I also feel that because the law field is purely male dominated, being a woman made my opportunities for advancement not as broad as the men in the field. In my opinion, if I was a man, I would have been given more opportunities. I also feel that incompetence, because it was a man's world, was more acceptable for men. A woman had to do twice as much to earn the same level of respect as a male lawyer. Incompetence was simply not something you could show as a female lawyer, all the while juggling between work and personal lives. It's clear that most women lawyers work much more than men, so it is more difficult for women. However, it was never that I was treated negatively. I just had to work harder. When I left the law firm, I chose to leave because I wanted to begin a family. My boss was so disappointed when I left, he practically cried. It isn't that I wasn't welcome; I was just expected to do more. You learn to work with the way things are in your career and even though women have begun to gain equality, that network of men is still there.

- 8) How would you define gender equality? Would you say gender equality is important to you? Why or why not?

Gender equality is very important to me. I would love for all of us to be treated equally. I don't know if that will happen right away, even though we're closer now than we have ever been, but much more progression of equal rights needs to continue for this equality to happen. As for my definition of gender equality, it would be equal pay, equal respect for the same job done no matter what field you're in.

- 9) It's often assumed that women are more emotional than men. Do you agree or disagree with that common assumption? Do you think a female president would be able to handle tough situations as well as a male president?

I disagree. I do not believe that women are more emotional at all. We do operate differently, yes, but we are not any more emotional than men. I am not an emotional person. No one can make me cry unless it's my choice. A while back at a meeting, I was the only woman with four or five men in the room. We were discussing an issue that seemed unsolvable. The men in the room, all of them, were so upset about this issue that they started crying. Tears! I was so bewildered by all of these men crying. That proves that men are just as emotional as women. When you first go into the law profession, you are trained to be unemotional. You take a lot of criticism and you learn to separate work from your personal life. Therefore, I think a woman would be able to handle tough situations as well as a male president. Absolutely. It just depends on the type of woman. I mean look at the queens they have had in England. Some of them were maniacal, terrifying. Women

have been in high positions making tough decisions all over the world, maybe not in our country, but it is absolutely possible for that to happen.

Thank you very much, Mrs. Powell, for answering my questions and giving me a very enlightening view of how women are treated, especially in the field of law and administration.