**Question Script for NJ Women’s Voices Interview**

***1) What is your:***

* ***Name?*** Suz
* ***Age?*** 22
* ***Education level?*** In college
* ***Current profession?*** Student/custom framer
* ***Marital status?*** Single
* ***Race/Ethnicity?*** Caucasian
* ***Hometown/where were you born?*** Manalapan, NJ
* ***Political affiliation?*** None
* ***Religion? (Or, would you consider yourself a religious/spiritual person?)*** Catholic
* ***Relationship to me (the interviewer)?*** Friend

***2) In what format did the interview take place? (face-to-face, phone, or email)***

Email

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

No

***4) What do you think about full-time stay-at-home mothers? What about full-time***

***stay-at-home fathers? If you have or plan to have children, what influenced,***

***influences or will influence your decision about how to manage childcare?***

I believe that full time stay at home parents are phenomenal, in general. (This does not discount the working parent; of course, they’re pretty spectacular, too.) Although society dictates otherwise, being a stay at home parent is a full time job, except there are no 30 minute lunch breaks or pay checks, no days off or sick days. The day doesn’t begin at 9 and end at 5. It is full time, all the time. It does not matter whether it is the mom or dad, it is still awesome. This does not mean it is not viewed differently, though. A woman becomes a stay at home mom and in general (not in all cases, but the majority) is underappreciated. It’s expected, she is supposed to take care of her children, keep house, be attentive to her husband and so on. This should make her fulfilled; it’s been so since the dawning of time. A man stays home and he faces societal pressures, as well. He feels un-masculine. He’s supposed to be earning money to support his family, for society dictates it, it must be so. Or the opposite, he is idolized, a man taking care of children? Who would have thought? He’s AMAZING. But is he any more so than a woman doing the same work? No, not so much. It is a magnificent commitment for either mom or dad to make, and they are both equally wonderful for doing so.

 As for what will influence my decision, I’m not quite sure. I want children, but I think I would rather adopt. There are so many children that need a home, I feel sort of selfish having my own, just to be able to claim I gave birth to them. The person I marry may feel differently, but that it what open communication is for.

***5) For you, what defines a woman? Is there anyone you can think of that embodies these qualities?***

 I don’t think there really is any single definition for a woman (or a man). Aside from the obvious anatomical differences, they are both just people. I don’t even truly believe one must have female sexual organs to consider their self a woman. I view the genders equally, neither is “better” than the other. Asking me to define a woman is like asking me to list all the personality traits in the universe, it’s simply impossible in such a limited space. It would go on for pages. I will say that I don’t believe a person is any less of a woman if they are timid and shy verses forceful and intimidating. Just as a man is no less a man if her cries, or likes pink. Perhaps, “well behaved woman rarely make history,” (Laurel Ulrich), but that does not make them less of a woman. All the females in my life are fine examples of women. Being a woman deals with one’s gender identity (even if they are biologically a male) and how they feel about their personal sexuality, not a check list of rigid guidelines one must fit to be considered a woman.

***6) What do you believe is the most challenging part about being a woman in today’s society? What personal struggles have you faced as a woman?***

Each woman faces her own demons as far as societal challenges go. The major ones seem to revolve around their weight, self worth, and juggling home life and their occupation. It is easier for men (not necessarily in an emotional sense, but in the eyes of most communities) to be all but absent from home life. Whether it is missing family dinners or months on end, it’s okay because they are bringing home the pay check. When a woman does this she is typically shamed with the prospect of being a bad mother and wife. After all, she belongs home with the children. On top of this the media is constantly shoving impossible ideals down a woman’s throat. They should be thin, sexy, and quick witted, but not too much so as to show up her man. She should work out at the gym, but not be too muscular. Skinny is the main point in these ads. Overweight is no good, but it does not make a person any less human if they kind of chubby. It’s not a reason they should feel badly about themselves, nonetheless this is something I am guilty of. I feel like I am huge, a lot, even though I know that logically I am about .02 over the “normal” BMI, I still think it. This is something that is not likely to change; the media has beaten it into our heads for so long, it has become a staple in the way women are defined, portrayed and expected to be and it is ridiculous. The average size for a woman in the US, right now, is a size 14. So why are we expected to be a size 0?

***7) Do you think we still live in a society where women are sexually exploited by or***

***oppressed by men? Why or why not? (What examples/evidence would you point***

***to support your ideas?)***

Women are most definitely oppressed by men globally, but if we are talking, strictly America, women are still exploited by some men. There are still rapes, domestic violence and sexual assaults as well as prostitutes (who do not want to be prostitutes), sex trafficking and enslavements going on across the country. For example, someone is sexually assaulted, in America, every 90 seconds and 35% of college men surveyed said they would rape a woman if they could get away with it. This speaks some about the value placed on women, their self esteem, and ability to stand up for themselves. This is not to say that I believe men are the sole problem, because I don’t. They can be influenced just as women are by expectations. The media plays its role, showing men as dominant, forceful creatures, and women as sex toys. A combination of the attacker, and society, makes the woman feel as if it were her fault. Only 39% (1 in 3) sexual assaults are reported. On a brighter note, women are making improvements in other areas. Did you know that for the first time women account for 50% of the work force? It is in the 2008 Shriver report and it made me tremendously happy. (Although, they are still the primary caregivers in addition to their new place in the financial word, it is a step in the right direction.) I cannot say whether this is due to the economy mandating they work (similar to World War II, where they needed to while the men were away) or the world is changing and a new era of empowered women is upon us. I think it is a little of both.

***8) Have you personally experienced sexism or know of anyone who has? If you***

***have, briefly describe the situation and its outcome.***

 I have experienced sexism, it was in fifth grade and the bigoted person was my teacher. He only liked the boys in class. In fact, all the girls, there were twelve of us or so, had the middle name Marie (with the exception of one girl whose middle name was Mary and one who’s middle name was Margaret). He told us we were “just girls so we must be the same” as such; he proclaimed he would only refer to us as a group. Our first names were not to be used and he would call us all Marie and point to the person he was referring to. Even at ten, I thought this was insane. I refused to answer to “Marie” it was not my name. I was sent to the principal’s office seven times that week for refusing to answer. Later that month, my friend and I chose to do our homework during recess. So did two boys. My friend and I got lunch detention, while the boys were commended. We were “just girls” we would “only be able to handle having a family and husband” when we grew up. Why were we “bothering to waste our time studying?” It’s not like we could “make anything of ourselves.” We received lunch detention. Needless to say, the principal got involved after that and nullified all disciplinary marks for such atrocities. Nothing much happened to him, just a slap on the wrist, really, but ten year old me was elated that the principal yelled at my teacher for me.

***9) Do you believe there is still a double-standard when it comes to men’s and***

***women’s sexual behaviors? For example, is society still more tolerant of men who have sex with multiple partners? Are there behaviors that women can exhibit that men cannot?***

 I do think there is still a double standard when it comes to men and women’s sexual behaviors. Society is definitely more tolerant of a man having multiple sexual partners than a woman; however I am not fully convinced this actually occurs. I think women are just as capable of having multiple partners, or having sex with no strings attached, it is just not vocalized. Women are shamed if they talk about it while men are high-fived by their buddies. But the sexual double standard goes both ways. Women can cry whenever they want to, men cannot. It can even come down to something as simple as what each sex is allowed to wear. Women can wear anything really, a dress, a skirt, pants, shorts tee shirts, hoodies, etc. Men, however, are pretty much limited to shorts and pants for lower attire. If women wear pants they might be a “tom boy” but if guys wear a skirt, they’re called horrible names and ostracized. Yes, the double standard does exist, but it is just as awful for males as it is for females; each are affected by different categories, but affected, nevertheless.

***10) 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 do not think men are necessarily more emotional, I think it is more accepted for a woman to show it. It depends more upon personality than it does upon which sexual organs a person has. Some people are sensitive and some are not. Men might try to hide emotions because their gender script tells them to be macho, tough, and rugged, but this does not mean they do not feel the emotion. If a person they care about is sick or passes away, I think they are just as scared or upset as a woman would be, they just choose (or are expected to) express that in a different way. May be they appear angry when they are truly sad, or laugh when they want to cry. Perhaps they lock themselves in a room and cry or talk to someone close to them, making them swear not to repeat it. Or they go the unhealthy route, and bottle it up inside, until it gets so intense that they blow up or get physically ill. No matter which of these occur, they still have the emotions, they are just not as free (as per society) to express them as a woman is. This is pathetic. Why shouldn’t they be allowed to express emotions? Why should women be considered the hysterical lunatic?

A woman president would be just as capable as a male. It does not really matter if the president is a female or a male, as long as they have good intentions and follow through with them. They need to be a good, charismatic leader with everyone’s best interest at heart. Not someone who will make empty promises and forsake their people. It’s the qualities of personality that will make or break the country, not whether they check off “male” or “female” on their application.

***11) 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?***

 Feminism in general has negative connotations tied with it. The word itself is problematic in that it is likely, in my experience, to elect images of “men hating, bra burning hippies,” which is utterly unacceptable. The stereotypes connected with it are of women with shaved heads, but who refuse to shave their under-arms or legs. They do not wear makeup, and they’re radical, even throwing rocks through car windows. This is an asinine picture. It is not at all what feminists stand for. All they really want is equality, to end discrimination and better the world. Yes, I would consider myself a feminist. In the latter sense, the real definition, Webster’s definition of feminism: “the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.”