

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH

BY DHIREN SHAH

The final interview for Women's History Month is with Valerie Jackson, Director of Planning for the City of Orange Township.

Dhiren Shah: Why do you think that women's history month is important?

Valerie Jackson: Because women have made a lot of progress over the last 20 to 25 years. I remember at one time, I was the first woman doing technical work with AT&T in the '70s.

DS: In your opinion, which role is more important: mother, wife, daughter, sister, business woman, leader in society, or social worker?

VJ: I think all of the above are important to women. I served all of those roles: mother, daughter, wife, and leader. I think you cannot separate any of those, particularly when the working woman has a leadership role in the community. All of the roles are important to me.

DS: Are women discriminated against due to gender in the workplace and society today?

VJ: Women have come a long way. They haven't come far enough. If you look at salaries, women are not compensated as well as men. It's not just salaries; we

LOCAL WOMEN'S VIEW



Valerie Jackson,
Director of Planning for the City
of Orange Township

have to look at the total compensation package. Women have come a long way, but there is still disparity with men.

DS: What do you think woman's role is in society?

VJ: Women's role is different from the past. We are career women. Women are family people, mothers who care for

children and try to take care of home. Women have many roles. We have to recognize that we cannot do them all alone. We have to create a support system and support network. Our friends and family are very important to us, as they support us.

DS: Are you married, and do you have children?

VJ: I am a widow. I have been a widow for the last 8 years. I have one daughter. She is 32 years old.

DS: What difficulty did you face while raising your child?

VJ: My daughter in this case, my stepdaughter, is a photographer and travels around the world. The problem is feeling comfortable, as many societies outside the U.S. are very traditional. So, the challenge there is trying to help her understand the fact that in those places, women are not allowed to give their views like in America.

DS: What difficulty did you face while you were growing up as a child?

VJ: When I grew up, I grew up in a

two-parent household. My father was a very traditional at that time. I have a brother also. My father had to learn that women should be treated equal to men. I think it was a learning experience for my father. I think he overcame some of his traditional values in order for me to blossom. Sometimes that was challenging, my father's beliefs.

DS: Can you give any instance when you felt your father would have done something different?

VJ: I am the oldest child. When I graduated from college, undergraduate school, I told my father that I wanted to go to graduate school. My father asked me, "What do you want to do that for?" When my brother graduated from college two years later and told my father that he was going to law school, my father said, "You will be able to take care of yourself and family." I really felt bad that time. So, my father and I have many discussions. Women need to take care of themselves, etc. By changing his views, I was able to blossom.

DS: What do you think about the future of women?

VJ: I think women are in a good place. I think we've demonstrated that we can do any job and have any career. One day, I hope to see a woman become president.