

YWCA seeks to eliminate racism, empower women

NEWSMAKER Q&A

Dana Campbell Saylor has been CEO of the YWCA of Maricopa County since June 2006.



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She has served four Arizona governors in the Governor's Division for Women. She was on Gov. Rose Moford's Head Start Advisory Council and Children's Justice Task Force. She also served on the Phoenix Women's Commission.

"I grew up in a Dutch family," she said. "We believed that giving back to your community with time and resources were each individual's responsibility. We had lengthy conversations about the complex issues of the day, and many differing opinions.

"I had wise women mentors within the family who were ahead of their time. Before the title of 'feminist' existed, they were definitely 'womanists' and had progressive ideas and goals."

Campbell Saylor, who holds a bachelor's degree in women's studies from Arizona State University, was the guest on *aztalk Live Talk* Wednesday last week. Here are excerpts from the conversation. For her full interview with *Viewpoints/aztalk* editor Joe Garcia, go to aztalk.azcentral.com.

For information about the YWCA, call 602-258-0990 or go to www.ywcaaz.org.

1. The YWCA's mission is: "eliminating racism, empowering women." What does that mean exactly, and how are you effecting change?

It means that we work toward eliminating discrimination, which includes racism, wage/pay inequity, and providing health care for all families. We work to develop opportunities for women's growth in leadership and power to achieve human rights, dignity, freedom, health, security, justice and peace for all people. We provide empowerment through education. These are family, cultural, societal issues that affect the quality of life for all. We are making changes in many ways.

2. Tell us about the YWCA Maricopa County Women's Empowerment Lecture Series and coming speakers?

Our next Empowering Women Lecture is Sept. 16, featuring Kathryn Hinsch of the Women's Bioethics Project. The rapid advance of biotechnology is quickly outpacing our ability as a society to absorb the effect it will have on our lives. From stem-cell research to the Schiavo case, bioethics has created a whole new world of issues and questions. Dr. Heather Cunliffe, cancer research scientist for TGEN and YWCA board member, will join Kathryn in the lecture and discussion. This will be very interesting conversation.

3. What has Hillary Clinton's campaign meant? With her racially charged comments, her candidacy may be "empowering women," but many would argue it certainly wasn't about "eliminating racism."

Women like Hillary should have the opportunity to run for political office, but are not entitled. Racially charged comments about any opponent, regardless of party, would in no way be supported by the YWCA mission. Any woman political candidate running for political office will inspire de-



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bate and empower other women to consider running for political office as well.

4. Is there still a double standard when it comes to women leaders? Does a woman always have to give the aura of being "tough"?

The YWCA rejects attitudes that regard the traditionally ascribed masculine characteristics of aggression, power and competition as good and desirable, and the ascribed feministic characteristics of compassion, tenderness and compromise as weak. We tend to reject both the practice of separating human qualities into two categories — one for men and one for women — and the valuing of one above the other. Instead we recognize that all such characteristics are in both sexes or may appear in either sex, and we value each of them on their own merit.

5. How political is the YWCA? Will there be any position on key presidential issues, say *Roe vs. Wade*, lesbian rights or family legislation?

Yes. We believe in reproductive rights and have

a stated position. We have a national YWCA policy statement regarding immigration and a position statement supporting Early Childhood Education. The YWCA Women's Action Alliance was established to create a unified collective voice to address policies, practices and issues with the goals of empowering women, eliminating gender-based wage discrimination, reducing and ultimately eliminating hate crimes. We work toward supporting good legislation and blocking bad. The YWCA Women's Action Alliance provides access to and information about legislative bills to members so that they may make their own informed decisions.

6. What's the No. 1 issue facing women?

There is one critical issue that affects every woman ... Discrimination is the underlying cause of wage disparity. It affects women in every stage of life, regardless of career field or position. The gender bias case, *Lilly Ledbetter vs. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, is a good example, because it deals with an illegal pay discrimination action. Over a lifetime, this wage gap adds up to astonishing financial losses for women and their families; \$700,000 for a high school graduate and \$1.2 million for a college graduate and \$2 million for women with graduate degrees. ... This impacts the financial quality of life for every family member.

7. Maybe it's a silly question, but do you ever wish the Village People had recorded YWCA instead of YMCA?

That is a good example of "M" being automatically in the conscious. I doubt that "W" was ever considered. However, I think that we have a theme song, it's just not copywritten yet: *Hear Me Roar*. It is a slower dance, of course.