

Jesutofe Salau: [00:14](#) Hello to all of our listeners. My name is Tofe and today is another great day to be a social worker. Welcome to social work, amplified a podcast, hosted by SPEAK. SPEAK stands for social policy, education, advocacy, and knowledge. And our mission is to amplify the voices of social workers by providing resources, increasing students, political engagement, and facilitate networking opportunities. SPEAK would like to gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Simmons sisters fund at Texas women's foundation. I would like to introduce our guest for today's podcast, Amanda Sergeant. Amanda Sergeant is an empowerment coach, community administrative practitioner, and an advocate for diversity equity and inclusion. Amanda is a university of Texas graduate with a bachelor's of arts in asking DPO studies and university of Texas at R state graduate with a master's of social work through her many roles. Sergeant aims to extend her passion for people and an advocate for high quality education and accountability by empowering people to be their best prior to her appointment.

Jesutofe Salau: [01:31](#) As a program manager of the south central region within Rhodes. Amanda has served organizations such as the Dallas director of the university of Texas division of diversity and community engagement, Dallas independent school district centered for addiction and recovery studies, girl Scouts of central Texas, Texas college advising corporation, a Mary Corps, Austin partners in education, as well as abroad at Ashe. My senior high school in a Ghana with the goal of enhancing the opportunities available to youth and students of diverse populations. Her passion for interpersonal development and student success can be felt through her many presentations and coaching sessions throughout her career. As a future readiness professional, she has helped student to earn over 50 million in scholarships. In addition to their admission into a highly competitive undergraduate and graduate programs. She has been recognized by Stanford university for her exceptional teaching and by Sigma PI five fraternity for her excellence in teaching in may of 2018, a L Sergeant was elected to the de Soto ISD board of trustees play seven C and serve at school board president until may of 2021. Miss Sergeant is the founder and CEO of get your life company, which is a consulting firm, empowering people to take their dreams and themselves to unprecedented levels. In her spare time, Amanda can be found singing, dancing, acting, teaching, Zumba, traveling, and spending time with family and friends. Her motto is prior preparation and poor performance. Hello, Amanda, how are you doing today?

Amanda Sargent: [03:24](#) I'm well, thank you so much for the invitation. I'm excited to be here.

Jesutofe Salau: [03:29](#) Yes, it's our pleasure. So we're gonna go straight into the first question you received your undergrad and African DIA four studies. So what led you into getting that higher degree in social work?

Amanda Sargent: [03:43](#) Yes, yes, yes. Yes. So, um, again, thank you again for this invitation. So thinking back when I was in my undergrad, uh, program at the university of Texas at Austin, um, it was a very interesting time. I entered undergrad the fall of 2000 and as most of us can remember, that was when we elected, uh, president Barack Obama into office. And so a lot of conversations came out of that. Um, at the time, a lot of history that I had never learned before also came to the surface and of course, throughout, um, his tenure as president in his first term, as well as the second term, we, how a lot of violence kind of occur against African American communities was magnified. And during that time, Trayvon Martin, uh, was murdered and that really left an impact on me. Um, I come from a very large family at the time.

Amanda Sargent: [04:34](#) I had very small nephews and I thought about my brother and my brother-in-laws and my uncle and my father course. And I was like, you know, I need to learn more about this. I need to add more things to my toolbox. And so that really led me to pursue, uh, my bachelor's in African and African di for studies because there are black people all over the globe. And while we do have a shared history, we are existing in so many places and spaces. Um, I remember after graduating and entering the workforce that I realized I needed to add more things to my toolbox. Um, you know, that bachelor's degree, it goes, um, away, but you need more education. Um, and it was during my time working in a public school that I was met with students who felt like that they could trust me. And at that time I had just stepped on campus.

Amanda Sargent: [05:25](#) I might have been there for a week. <laugh> not even two weeks. And, uh, I remember a student coming to me and sharing some information that had happened to her. And she was like, you're the only person that I could trust. And I was like, I am built different <laugh>. So I need to go back to school, um, and add some more to tools to my toolbox. And that led me to pursue a degree in social work. I've always loved people. I always loved systems and situations. Um, and I just wanted to learn more about them and be able to do my best helping. And I felt like, uh, earning a degree and pursuing a degree in social work was definitely going to put me on the path to be able to do that more confidently.

Jesutofe Salau: [06:04](#) Awesome. That is such a unique story. And that's why I love to ask that question because everybody's story is very much different. Yeah. So in your pursuit of that, master's in social work. What made you that you wanted to take the community administrative practice route? Because there is, you know, micro social work out there. So what made you decide to focus on the macro route?

Amanda Sargent: [06:27](#) Oh man. You know, I think that that is such a, um, uh, most people, when they think about social work, it's like, okay, CPS council, you know, maybe you do some circle time. Like nobody's really thinking about

what are some more creative ways to utilize this degree. And, um, I'm one person that I'm like, I wanna be able to ride a die behind anything that I put behind my name, you know, initials, whatever, if it's education, I wanna be able, uh, to feel confident about what I intend do later. And so while I respect all the direct practitioners out there, um, I knew that the way my mind works, I'm very much a systems person. I'm very much an ideas person. Um, programming requires a lot of planning, so yes, you wanna impact this one student to do this one goal, but how can we get more students through that door?

Amanda Sargent: [07:20](#) How can we get more adults to complete a sequence of, uh, tasks so that they can then, you know, make better for themselves? And so, uh, community administrative practice really spoke to me because that again is kind of my interest. That's my wheelhouse. Um, I remember being in a situation where I worked for a nonprofit. And of course, when you work in nonprofits, it's a lot of business associated with that. You have to learn, uh, learn how to manage budgets. You have to know what the policy says. The policy then has to, you know, infer what you do on a daily day operational standpoint. You wanna be able to say the student has grown in these ways and direct practice kind of both focus is on following that one participant. And again, you know, community administrative practice allowed me to think more in terms of, you know, my business acumen and how I wanted to either build programs or evaluate programs. Um, and then that eventually led into my interest in policy.

Jesutofe Salau: [08:17](#) That's good. And I really love how you mentioned how I want people think of social workers. They think of CPS, you know, so many people that I tell, oh, I'm gonna be a social worker. They just think, oh, you're gonna be working with children. Right. And like, social work is so much more broader than that. So, you know, you took that broad route to, you know, make a better, a bigger impact. So, you know, talking about that, can you tell, tell us a little bit about the organization in roads, first of all, what does that stand for and what does that organization do?

Amanda Sargent: [08:49](#) Yes. So inroad, um, it's not necessarily an acronym. Um, back in 1963, Martin Luther king had just delivered his, I have a dream speech and it was so moving. I mean, clearly we're still talking about it today. Um, but in the audience was a man by the name of Frank Carr. Frank Carr, um, is actually the mastermind behind inroad. And we have been running for over 51 years and, and ultimately, um, he wanted to build bridges and connections for African Americans and other underserved groups to generational wealth by way of the workforce and corporate America. Um, so one of the things that I have the opportunity of doing is connecting some of our most talented and bright minds, um, exposing them to opportunities in corporate America, setting them up with internships, but also being that coach to walk alongside them. Um, I think in the recent years you hear a lot of talk about imposter syndrome and most of the time you have established

professionals having that conversation, but there are so many college students who just don't know, and it's not that they don't wanna do. They just have never had somebody walk alongside them. And so inroad is an organization, a nonprofit, again, that operates within the corporate sector to help, uh, black and brown students. And of course, all students kind of go through this process to again, be successful in corporate America and their longevity within the workforce to C-suite executives.

Jesutofe Salau: [10:20](#) Awesome. It's so amazing to hear that there's an organization like that and it's, it has existed for 51 years because I haven't heard about that organization, but you know, I was in high school. I never heard about it. So it's nice to know that there's an organization like it. And what setting do you do this? Just your work. What setting are you? The program director?

Amanda Sargent: [10:40](#) So, um, I'm sure everybody knows about the big C COVID right. Uh <laugh> so COVID has taken, um, a lot of what would have been in person meetings to occur online. Um, and I think it's even amazing because, um, when they've first opened the Dallas chapter, we were able to connect with students all over the state of Texas, not just those that were able to drive or carpool to the location as they had been operating previously. And so, uh, we've been able to set time with students. Um, if they're in high school, they typically meet on Saturdays. If it's a college student, um, they have have one-on-one scheduled throughout the month, as well as corporate training sessions to prepare them for their internship as well as, um, different workshops on soft skills. So, um, like I said, thank God for zoom. I know a lot of people is zoomed out, but, um, I always tell people if you have a high school student who is willing to wake up on a Saturday and log onto a computer for a couple of hours to be poured into, that says a lot about what is being put out, uh, by inroad.

Amanda Sargent: [11:45](#) So, yeah.

Jesutofe Salau: [11:47](#) Hmm. That's really cool. So you start to give us a little bit of, um, insight to what your day looks like, but for upcoming social work students that might be interested in a position like yours, such as the program manager of in rose. Can you provide a brief insight into what you do overall or what a, like a day looks like for you?

Amanda Sargent: [12:06](#) For sure. Um, I wanna start by saying that nothing is lost in the kingdom. I've said that at a lot of times, I wanna keep that going. Nothing is lost in the kingdom. There are a lot of transferable skills. So even if you were somebody who's doing direct practice, um, taking on a role such as a program manager, uh, such as a director of an outreach program or a community center, you can still transfer all of the skill sets and coursework that you you're learning in your social work degree into these areas. So typically what it looks like, um, you start off with this, what may start off as a massive goal, right? So the goal is that you have to touch, um, 500 high

school students expose them to either a career field, provide them with knowledge, support parents in having and facilitating conversations about financial literacy and providing a student an opportunity for either an in-person internship or to shadow.

Amanda Sargent: [13:05](#) So that requires you to always keep that goal in mind. So what are the new ways to interact with students that might mean social media present that might mean doing your own research, sharing articles that might mean meeting with, um, parents one on one, or calling them and saying, Hey, we're having this workshop or, oh, did you know about this event that's happening in your backyard? I think it'll be a great opportunity for you and your family. Um, and then of course tracking that student's progress. Um, one thing that my entire career has run off on, and that is trust and trust is built. When you do what you say, when you say you're gonna do it at the extent in which you're gonna do it, we can also call that integrity. Um, but definitely in the field of social work, but definitely within this role, you have to be able to provide some deliverables because a lot of things are necessarily instantly gratifying for students.

Amanda Sargent: [13:58](#) Um, I, I believe there was an article that was put out that it was like, there are seven seconds of attention span on social media before you get swiped or somebody moves on <laugh>. Um, so you have to make sure you make the most of the time that you have with whoever's in front of you. Um, so that kind of is what it looks like. You have this overarching goal, you create new and innovative ways to put that in practice each and every day. And you make that person, even though they're part of this big program, feel like they are being individually met where they are and ultimately move them from the next task to the next task. And ultimately to this culmination ceremony of high school graduation, college acceptance, career entrance, um, and again, being able to fund the life that they have for themselves.

Jesutofe Salau: [14:43](#) Awesome. Yeah. I really like that she provided us like that overall operational goal. So for you personally, do you, um, are you working with students on a daily basis or does each date for you look different? Is it like sometimes meeting phone calls or is it every day you're out there on the field working with students?

Amanda Sargent: [15:03](#) Um, it's a little bit of everything. Um, so time management is number one skill set. If you don't, if you're not practicing, uh, great time management that works for you. I don't know what to tell you. Time management keeps your relationships healthy time management helps you succeed in any goal that you set for yourself individually. So, uh, for me, I try to send out all my correspondence early in the day. So as students are replying throughout the day, I could be in a meeting, but at least I know that touchpoint was made and they have then reached back and now I'm tagged to be it. Um, I schedule meeting with corporate partners because, um, they're seeking students or they wanna support students in whatever way

that looks like. And sometimes, um, being the sounding board to kind of help them process what that experience will look like for, uh, the student as well as them.

Amanda Sargent: [15:54](#) Um, and like I said, with parents, you know, they may be working throughout the day. They might be free at night. So sometimes it's like, okay, let me five people have asked this question, let me create a zoom invite so that we can, you know, address this just in case someone else who didn't pose. The question is also thinking the same thing. Um, so it really is being anticipatory of what somebody is thinking, but also reading the room and getting your work done. So that's why I say, if you start off with the goal, you can create your own plan. And then there are touch points of course, throughout the organization. But you wanna be sure that you have created a workload that you can keep up with, um, because ultimately you wanna honor your commitments to everybody. If somebody is reaching out for help, you wanna honor your commitment to help them, um, or at least provide a resource or referral, uh, to make sure that they get the information that they need.

Jesutofe Salau: [16:47](#) Mm that's good. And it seems like, um, your day to day, life looks like a lot of initiative take, like you have to take the initiatives, you don't really wait around for somebody to tell you what to do, but you see what you look at, what needs to be done and you take the initiative to get it done, which is great. <laugh> so you recently served as a civic leader, which I think is amazing. <laugh> so, um, you were recently the school board president for the Soto I independent school district. So how were you able to transfer your skills as a social worker when you served as a school board president for the soda is D

Amanda Sargent: [17:24](#) Yes. Oh my gosh. Great question. Thank you for that question. Um, I feel like social workers literally can do EV any and everyth and we are trained and taught in such a way that we're anticipating how the system is then going to impact all of these different populations. Uh, the school system, public schools are, are definitely like a large touchpoint for so many Americans, so many people, even throughout the globe. And that experience happens on a calendar like it's cyclical. You go from one thing to the next and next thing you know, it's been a year and from a school standpoint, there's these knowledge and skills that you have to learn before you get to move to the next level. But in the, in the meantime you provide lunch, you, you know, you have teachers, you have different staff on, on, um, on call. You have principals, you have a budget that you have to maintain, you have to put money towards different programs.

Amanda Sargent: [18:24](#) So it really is all encompassing of the things that we learn in social work, especially, uh, what we talk about in community administrative practice. Um, so as a board president who was leading at, in the height of COVID, there were so many things that were on the table that were beyond

the operation of school, right. Schools exist so that we can educate students to be able to learn and do, and do it with confidence to move to the next level. But we were thinking about how can we keep them safe? How can we, you know, ensure that there is not this virus that is gonna spread around and shut down schools for extended period of time, since we are working, you know, and learning from home, do we have internet access? Do we have devices if students are coming to school and this is all only time, if they get a meal, breakfast and lunch, how can we ensure that we set up different pods and portals for lunches to be served so that those families can eat? So it was literally one of those things where it was like, I'm so glad I have all these things in my toolbox <laugh>

Jesutofe Salau: [19:25](#) Yeah,

Amanda Sargent: [19:25](#) Because if I was thinking, well, I can only control what happens from eight to three o'clock. I, I wouldn't have been able to be flexible to think about all the other things that, you know, we're going with that and not to mention the policy changes that came down, um, the pipeline as well. So it literally was one of those things where you earn a degree, you use it in a certain capacity, you know, for your professional work. And then as a civic leader, it was like, wow, I'm so glad that I've always had this thought process and I'm not learning it and having to actively do it at the same time. So it was, it was a great experience, but definitely one for the books, I need to write a book about it.

Jesutofe Salau: [20:12](#) I was even gonna say, I don't know if you answered that civic, um, that civic leader position, um, during the pandemic, or was it before the pandemic, did you know it

Amanda Sargent: [20:20](#) Was before

Jesutofe Salau: [20:23](#) Expect the pandemic to happen?

Amanda Sargent: [20:25](#) Yeah. I, I mean, I don't think anybody saw it coming, you know, like we were all just living our lives normally, and, and I still reflect back on, um, kind of the school calendar, you know? Right. So everybody's preparing for spring break or they just went on spring break or they're holding their breath, you know, literally self care and just, we could just make it to spring break. You know, everybody had whatever going on and it was like, stop Paul. Yeah, stay in the house. Don't go nowhere. Don't do nothing. Don't talk to nobody. Ooh, if you talk to me, I might get it in my nose. Like, you know, it was so many things that were happening. Um, and I had started my term in May of 2018. And of course the pandemic takes place in, uh, 2020. So it was just one of those things where it's like, okay, I think I have a handle of being, you know, in civic leadership and, you know, going to these meetings and evaluating packets and whatever's on the floor.

Amanda Sargent: [21:19](#) And then it was like, yeah, nobody has tackled this before this isn't a, let me pick up a book and see what I should do. This is, every body is on the same level field, and we just wanna do what's best for every human being involved. Um, and I thought it was, and is, you know, we're still kind of picking up the pieces, but it was truly one of those things where we were handling business, but we were very intentional about asking each other how we were doing. And as a, a social worker that lit me up because I'm like, everybody's ignoring the fact that we're all humans having our own journeys and experiences, and we're still expected to perform. Now we're taking into account, how are you doing? How's your kid? How's your, you know, that's not just a pleasant tree. It was genuine. I hope you're okay. Okay. Let's settle ourselves long enough to get this work done and then, you know, proceed to business. So it was a beautiful moment. Uh, I, I I'm, thankfully that that's just naturally a part of my personality, but I think more people have more sensitive to other people's struggles because of it. Um, so it was a definitely interesting time in civic leadership for sure.

Jesutofe Salau: [22:32](#) The pandemic did bring about some good. I like how you mentioned, um, how, you know, the education that we receiving social work, or as social workers, it equips us with a thought process. Like, and we're able to apply that thought process in many, like instances, especially in the civic leadership role, we're able to apply that thought process. And we don't have to like, you know, like have to facilitate a new thought process. We already have that thought process to be successful in stuff like civic leadership.

Amanda Sargent: [23:02](#) Right. Yeah.

Jesutofe Salau: [23:05](#) Yeah. So, um, we're gonna go ahead, actually. I wanted you have a get your life L T D corporation, I believe. So. Can you tell us a little bit about your company and what you do in there?

Amanda Sargent: [23:19](#) Yes. So, um, as you already stated, my motto is prior preparation prevents poor performance, get your life. So, um, during my time working in public education, I tell my students that they would actually repeat after me. And this was in a, uh, nine through 12 high school setting that I would do these workshops. And, um, I decided to keep doing that, you know, sometimes you move on to the next thing in your life, but your heart and your passion is still in, uh, helping people wherever they are. So I did a lot of work with non-traditional college students. So adults who were pursuing their bachelors for the first time were seeking out associates degrees in their fifties and sixties. Um, as well as, you know, college students who had gone through this conveyor build of education to next, as well as high school students who had this expectation of going to college or career, but just really didn't know where to start.

Amanda Sargent: [24:12](#) Um, so that's what get your life is get your life is the responsibility that you have to make it happen for you. Yes, there are

systems, there are sequences set in place, but if you don't activate you, you, it, it's, you it's on you. So yes. So that is, that is the heart of what get your life is. And so, um, how it shows up is typically being a thought partner for a lot of different people who either are interested in starting their own businesses, um, facilitating conversations with people, um, family just needing, you know, their own personal event. They don't want it on television. They just want to be able to <laugh> talk within, you know, the privacy of their own homes, about conversations that they may just need a mediator there for. Um, and so it's really a beautiful thing because I own it mm-hmm <affirmative>. Um, but it's really one of those things that I will be doing way. So, um, I just wanted to, like I said, fully wrap my arms around it, similar to when I ran for office, I had students that were like, miss, why aren't you, I mean, you telling us to do all this stuff, but you ain't even did. I was like, you know what, I will not have my edges snapped by these children. Um, so yeah, so that really motivated me and encouraged me to, just to move forward, uh, with getting my LLC.

Jesutofe Salau: [25:32](#) Awesome. That seems like a great organization. Yeah. So now we're gonna move into our advocacy question. So you've held many positions, you know, we read them in your biography. So what does advocacy mean to you? You, and did you ever see yourself as a future advocate?

Amanda Sargent: [25:54](#) Oh, okay. You posed two questions there. So advocacy to me is being empathetic and sympathetic to the point of action.

Jesutofe Salau: [26:10](#) Oh, I like that.

Amanda Sargent: [26:11](#) So I'll use that as my definition. Mm-hmm, <affirmative>, um, your, your empathy stretches beyond your thoughts, your, your sympathy stretches beyond, you know, the like, or the heart on Facebook or social media, and it really calls you to actually do something different, uh, whatever that sphere of info for you. Um, and did I ever see myself becoming an advocate or being an advocate? Um, and look, let, let, just be honest with you. So growing up as an African American child, everybody who was kind of put on this platform of advocacy or an advocate, or, you know, somebody who made great changes, they were all assassinated. So that wasn't something that I wanted to also do in my life. So <laugh>, unfortunately, that was the thought process that I had. I was like, Martin Luther king had a dream and something happened to him and Malcolm X had a dream.

Amanda Sargent: [27:08](#) Something happened to him and, you know, Nelson Mandela's locked up. Like it was, it was not this. It was like, yes, I wanna make change. But it looks like, you know, E E even my Lord say, Jesus Christ. You know, we just celebrated Easter weekend. And it's like, every time somebody wanna make change, it just looks a like death is coming. And I don't know, um, if I necessarily wanna do that, um, however, my heart for people withstood all of that. So I understood, um, or I should say, I've come to the point of

understanding what love actually means and how, if you gonna care that much, then that means you are to do something. So faith that works is dead. It's not one thing to hope for a better tomorrow. Sometimes you literally have to roll up your sleeves and do. And so, um, that is kind of what drove me to this particular way of advocating in this space.

Jesutofe Salau: [27:59](#) Yes. And I love your definition, empathy sympathy with action. Yes. That's what advocacy is. I'm sure. Did I say it right?

Amanda Sargent: [28:10](#) Yes, yes, yes. Okay.

Jesutofe Salau: [28:11](#) I love that definition because like you said, you know, it's one thing to feel the feelings, think the thoughts, but we're just gonna, if we never do anything, if we never take any action, we're gonna continue to be in that pattern of feeling the feelings and think of the thoughts, you know, and nothing ever changed. So, you know, I really like that definition.

Amanda Sargent: [28:30](#) Yeah.

Jesutofe Salau: [28:31](#) So a big part of advocacy is political engagement. What are some of the ways you choose to remain politically engaged?

Amanda Sargent: [28:41](#) Yes, yes, yes. Yes. So, great question. Great question. Um, I feel like everybody has latched onto the importance of voting, right? Um, I think a lot of efforts have been made to ensure that we maintain our engagement in the election cycle, beyond presidential elections, but also local election. Um, so I vote in every election. I personally enjoy voting early, you know, um, there have been a lot of things that have kind of come down the pipeline as it relates to polling hours locations. So voting early is key. Okay. Make a plan, do it. Um, I, I also, uh, choose to share information because you'll be surprised how many people just, you know, everybody had to take government in high school and it kind of went in one area and out the other, but we still are living our daily lives, experiencing the consequences of any one vote for, from our elected officials.

Amanda Sargent: [29:45](#) And so for me, I try to ensure to educate people to not be downtrodden when they vote a certain way. And they, you know, it may not show up immediately operational wise, um, or sometimes just explaining what a policy means for them. Um, so typically I'll either do social media posts. I might do quick videos, um, about, Hey, this is what it means to you. I remember I had a lot of, uh, students who were voting for the first time and they didn't realize they needed to register to vote before the actual election, or, you know, what type of forms of identification they needed in order to register. So sometimes it's just genuinely sharing information about how to be involved, um, and then connecting people with organizations that are of interest to them, you know, um, especially with women's rights, uh, women's health, um, initiatives. Like there are a lot of ways to stay engaged, be

beyond election cycles. Yes, that is a political move, but you could also donate to certain research centers. You could also volunteer, you know, um, sometimes you actually need human bodies to do different things. So there are plenty of ways to maintain, uh, political engagement beyond elections, but that's the way that I choose to, uh, show up in that space now.

Jesutofe Salau: [31:02](#) Awesome. And I like how you mentioned how you educate people when you know, their vote doesn't seem to have work, you know, cause I think a little, a lot of people do get discouraged when, you know, they vote and they're like, well, I voted and you know, my, the person I voted for didn't get elected. So why I vote, you know? And like you said, I think we're, we all did to government in high school, but it went through one ear and not the other. So

Amanda Sargent: [31:28](#) <crosstalk>

Jesutofe Salau: [31:28](#) Educate our peers in regards to like, you know, although you did vote, it might not, the, the results might not come out as you want, but that's okay. Keep voting

Amanda Sargent: [31:37](#) Right. And monitor. Right. Cause sometimes we put people in office then, you know, we just assume that they don't need oversight. And, and I don't say oversight as to like Hasling wrangle, but if something comes up, that's important to you and it's within their wheelhouse to vote on, you know, that may be a time that you need to pick up the phone or write a letter or, or go down and, you know, voice or speak on the floor about how you feel about something. So, um, like I said, there, there are plenty of ways to be involved. Voting is very important. Um, but there are plenty of ways to kind of activate your space for, um, advocacy.

Jesutofe Salau: [32:15](#) That's very true. So what simple advice would you give social work students that want to get involved in advocacy work?

Amanda Sargent: [32:25](#) Mm. Simply put <laugh> um, simply put, if something is bothering, you see what it's connected to.

Jesutofe Salau: [32:36](#) Mm.

Amanda Sargent: [32:37](#) Um, I feel like, and, and I say this as somebody who still has student loans, right. That has taken on kind of this life of its own. And we're like, oh, well I just hope, I think they said something about da and it's like, well, if that's something that is, is weighing on your mind, you might wanna use that as a pressure point to start looking at how you can get involved in that process. Oh my goodness. They're gonna vote on, you know, at, at, so for example, quite a few places of employment are actually setting up student loan funds. So they might have tuition reimbursement, or they might offer to pay \$50 on your student. You know, student loans every month that may come up in the organization's board meeting, you work for that

organization. That that was a way for you to get involved or at least inquire about it. That's a form of advocacy that's bothering you. That's something that you can actually do within your realm and sphere of influence to get, you know, to find out more of. Um, but I, I often feel like if it's something that is bothering you, that means that you're called to do something about it, no matter how big or small. So that's my simple advice.

Jesutofe Salau: [33:53](#) <laugh> I really, really like that it, something is bothering you see what is connected to, because you already had that passion I already, but then you, right. So all you do is need to find that place where you can, um, use that passion to bring about the change. That's a really great advice. So if you could start all over again with advocacy, because, you know, I think you've been at advocacy for a while now, since 2008, you said you got undergrad degree. So what would you do differently if you could start all over again, if anything at all?

Amanda Sargent: [34:28](#) Oh man. Um, Hmm. If I could start all over again. I mean, I, so many things come in my mind when I think about that, but I guess for me, something that has shown even more so in my adult life is really embracing my voice. Um, I don't think I've said it on this particular platform, but I am the youngest of five children. Um, my father is a Baptist preacher. My mom, um, was a huge proponent of education. And I've always kind of, you know, because I was a preacher's daughter or work, you know, grew up in church, you know, we had to grab the mic and do speeches. We had to do this. So I never necessarily had a fear surrounding public speaking, but I wouldn't translate that into the other areas of my life. So I feel like if I were to do it again, I would, I would embrace my voice in all spaces of my life. Um, I was a cheerleader. I was, you know, in school I was a tri captain. So of course I'm, I'm used to yelling at people and telling them to yell back at me, you know, I'm, I'm giving you instructions. Right. But, you know, I could, if I could do it again, I would definitely encourage myself to continuously lead and not disengage in D in areas in my life. Yeah, for sure.

Jesutofe Salau: [35:59](#) That's good. Because I think sometimes it's not necessarily that we have a fear of speaking, you know, but we speak in the places where we're most comfortable. And I think for advocacy, you have to go beyond your comfort zone and that's what scares people. So I really like that. You said that.

Amanda Sargent: [36:16](#) Yeah, for sure.

Jesutofe Salau: [36:18](#) So, um, through your work, you seem to be focused on youth and student empowerment, which is a great cause. You know, I feel like youth, there are futures, so we have to be focused on them, but how do you engage other people in a cause that you are so passionate about?

Amanda Sargent: [36:36](#) Yes. I mean, we're, we're, we really are all connected. I, I feel like we know that, um, but we're all connected and, um, you know, youth

engagement keeps me young. Uh, I'm not, of course, you know, I, I just feel like I'm youthful in nature, but it's really because I try to ensure the, that even the least of these I'm worried about, you know, if I can provide a voice to a four year old who, you know, isn't speaking on the same terms as, you know, the parent might be interested in, but if I can get this four year old to say, you know, I really wish that that teacher I had last year, but come back, cuz I really liked that teacher cuz she was here all the time and now I don't know who my teacher is. That's a, a four or five year old.

Amanda Sargent: [37:24](#) That's saying I want consistency in the classroom. Mm-hmm <affirmative> you see what I'm saying? That's that much more powerful for me to then turn to the parent and say, did you know that, you know, your student just said that, how did, how do you feel about that? I didn't even realize that they care. You know? So, so that's what I'm saying. So it's, it's one of those things where I'm like, how can I connect the commonalities between us? Um, and how can I be the best facilitator of different conversations? So I have a, a core passion, um, in general. And that's really, as you know, you kind of already alluded. It's just that people need to feel empowered within themselves to get things done. If everybody's waiting around on somebody else to do the work, you could be waiting for years and years and be bitter and you're waiting, right.

Amanda Sargent: [38:14](#) So how can I engage you with where you are and say that, that little, that little task that you did had ripple effect to even this four year old child is saying the same thing that this, you know, 70 year old couple is saying because they live in the same community and they also want the students to be excited to go to school because the teacher is in the classroom and the parent is excited because the student is waking up actively ready to go to school because they wanna be there. So all of those things are, are connected, but you know, we all have our different vantage points. So like I said, definitely just trying to be a facilitator of conversation to see what we do have in common. Um, and then providing people a way to tap in wherever they may be. Cause I think we're really good at saying what we can't do or what we've never done before. Um, and sometimes we just want the instructions to, to do something. So

Jesutofe Salau: [39:09](#) Yeah, that's, that's really good cause you you're right. We're all connected in some way or the other. So you like making those connection points for other people and then facilitating those conversations, definitely help, you know, get other people to, to come on on a, come on a cause that you're so passionate about.

Amanda Sargent: [39:29](#) Yeah.

Jesutofe Salau: [39:29](#) So I'm gonna ask you one last question and this is something that I think is really important, especially when it comes to advocacy. So advocacy can be really taxing. It can drain a person mentally, emotionally, and physically, but I

believe that it can still be enjoyable for you. What are the most enjoyable aspects of the process of advocacy?

Amanda Sargent: [39:55](#) Oh yeah. I'm glad you asked this question because I, like you said, everybody knows the taxing part, you know, self-care is like the first thing that we talk about in every social work course and it's kind of taken on a life of its own, um, in terms of a buzzword, but what I really enjoy most about advocacy is learning other people's stories. Like you would be surprised what somebody may have experienced and or what somebody remembers about a certain situation or, or, or life journey that they've had. Um, and I feel like I've always felt like the best way to advocate for a cause or an initiative or anything is to learn from the people period. You know, you have to be present within a community in order to serve it. And um, that kind of drove me to running for office because I was a product of this particular school district had even gone back to serve as a university partner with my school district.

Amanda Sargent: [40:58](#) But it was like, oh, you can help a little bit more. You can, you know, you can lean in a little bit further. Um, and so listening to different people's experiences is definitely enjoyable. Um, I think what's even even more so enjoyable than having those conversations is connecting people with resources. That's also great because you know, everybody wants to advocate to change something. Sometimes the change happens immediately and when it happens immediately, it's like, oh my gosh, we need to celebrate cuz y'all, don't understand, you know, what it took for us to get to this point in time. Um, and I'm huge on celebrating. We, I work hard, but I play that much harder. Right. Um, and so that's very, um, enjoyable about advocacy as well. And I think even beyond that is creating the, the roadmap of strategy around advocacy. Right. Um, I said it earlier in terms of coming up with innovative and creative solutions, I think about the pandemic and it was so disheartening that the death of George Floyd led to this conversation that made its way to corporate America.

Amanda Sargent: [42:12](#) But corporate America was like, oh my gosh, we have to do something. And they could have thrown money at it. Like, you know, a lot of people do like, oh, here's some money to this organization that I think is gonna help. But they said, oh my gosh, we're gonna diversify our board of directors. We're gonna make sure that, you know, we increase the, the visibility and representation of underrepresented groups that may work in our companies by, you know, 30% we're gonna create diversity equity and inclusion offices within our organizations. Like how much more further did that advocacy go from that one scenario. Right. Um, and I believe that that was an innovative and creative solution. So a lot of times the high marks in advocacy for me has been moments of celebration, the moments of connection hearing directly from somebody who's experienced, um, whatever the issue or need for change may be, or, or what they remember about those, um, encounters but forth.

Amanda Sargent: [43:08](#) And finally, definitely the, just the endless possibilities of ways to creatively solve for problems and how many people are actually willing to do it. Cause I feel like, um, a lot of times just human experiences, we've been disheartened by what has happened in the world to the point where a lot of people just choose to disengage and isolate themselves, but to be reaffirmed that there are still goodhearted human beings that are willing to do what they can to, to resolve a issue, um, is, is also some of the most enjoyable things. Like I said, restores my faith in humanity for sure. <laugh>

Jesutofe Salau: [43:49](#) And first of all, you know, and I think it's something that we should talk about more, you know, just letting people know that advocacy has some enjoyable points because it is taxing sometimes, you know, just like embarking on advocacy can seem so daunting to some people, but there are some enjoyable points. Like you've mentioned hearing other people's stories, connecting people to resources and also the celebration that happens after victory, after you see that change come forward. Those are the enjoyable things about advocacy that, you know, we can like focus on a little bit more to like start up that desire to be advocates within ourselves.

Amanda Sargent: [44:30](#) For sure. For

Jesutofe Salau: [44:31](#) Sure. Thank you Amanda, for spending time with me today. Thank you to all of our listeners for joining us for another episode of social work. Amplifi I hope you are able to learn something today that empowers you to become more politically engaged and helps you shape a better tomorrow until next.