

Janet Thomas

03/15/2023

Statement of Purpose

I believe there are many experiences that have shaped my desire to get a graduate degree in public administration. While it is hard to focus on one, I will start with my personal experience and the one I hold closely. My mother came from Panama and watching her navigate systems and institutions to try and survive in this country was eye opening. She was a single woman with two kids and had so many barriers to navigate because she was learning English and low income. When I became a mother myself, I had similar challenges but in differing ways. I spoke the language but when trying to navigate systems to survive, it often left me embarrassed, powerless and exhausted. More often than not, I find these systems are shaped by individuals that have never had to navigate them before and lack community engagement. They are often an experience that does not allow for people to feel a level of dignity and empowerment. I want to be able to contribute to something that would change that for others.

In my employment experience, I have worked in these systems at varying levels. I have supported families and individuals trying to access transitional housing, emergency financial assistance and access early learning programs. Through my employment experience, I have seen the impact of these programs and while they are helpful, I am also aware that more can be done. I want to be given the tools to navigate the political arena of this work. I know

people's experiences and stories but I want to be given the tools to shape something that will influence action. I would like to be given the tools to think more critically about how to make change that allows for more access, helps the most vulnerable individuals and does it in a way that feels supportive.

I currently hold a Bachelor of Arts degree in Gender, Women and Sexuality Studies, this program allowed me to examine inequities we have in society and think about how to make things better and create change. All these experiences have been a driving force to want to build something that would be helpful to others and do it in a way that would be meaningful.

Given the opportunity I want to deepen my understanding of how policy can influence positive change for communities. I want to know how I authentically engage with communities and ensure I elevate others needs. At Evergreen, I know I will be given the space to think creatively and be around others that are driven by the same goals and desires. The elements of Evergreen's MPA mission that draws me to the program is valuing fairness and equity, embracing diversity and advocating powerfully on behalf of the public. I find all these values are important for creating change. I believe embodying these values especially when you are working on matters that will have impact on others will ensure that there is the least amount of harm in what is being created. I believe that Evergreen will be the best place that will foster and strengthen my knowledge in the work that I do now and the work I would like to do in the future.