

I am a queer, nonbinary person. I spent the first two thirds of my life in Utah. From an early age, I wanted to change the world. Even as a child I sensed I wasn't safe and soon learned my identity was illegal. The supreme court struck down Sodomy laws when I was fifteen, but while not enforceable, they remained on the books in Utah for sixteen more years. My government would not protect me; I was determined to change it. I engaged in politics, government and policy from an early age. I was on the youth city council for my hometown and served as youth mayor my senior year of high school. I was president of my high school's model United Nations club and I went to university to study politics with the hopes of working for the United Nations.

I attended Utah State University and studied modern history and political science, earning a bachelor's degree in both fields. I served as an undergraduate teaching fellow and as the secretary of our university's middle eastern studies society. I focused my studies on genocide and ethnic cleansing. I wanted to understand why people kill their neighbors and how governmental structures and policies exacerbate tension and conflict. My fear for my own wellbeing and that of my friends translated into a desire to understand why violence occurs and how it can be prevented.

As I was completing my undergraduate, I felt state and local politics constricting my ability to live a full and authentic life. I watched the police harass my community, hate crimes go uninvestigated, and endured a myriad of small aggressions such as being written about in the university paper after a crowd turned hostile when my college partner and I kissed during a campus tradition historically reserved for straight couples. After graduating magna cum laude, I moved to Washington in search of the safety I needed to grow as a person and pursue my dream of making the world better.

The great recession made graduate school unfeasible, so I transferred my love of helping others to hospitality. During the several years I spent in the industry, I never lost my passion for politics, however my interests shifted from international to state and local government. I felt I could have the most impact by focusing on serving my neighbors and my community. In 2021, I went to work for the Department of Social and Health Services as a Public Benefit Specialist. Assisting Washingtonians access critical food, cash and medical services during the pandemic was both rewarding and disturbing. While I already knew this academically, I was confronted daily with the reality that despite its promises, our government is structurally racist and fundamentally inequitable. I saw in granular detail the ways in which the system is designed to prevent the most vulnerable people from accessing assistance.

My desire for change led me to my current role with DSHS. As a Management Analyst 4, the scope of my work covers mobile outreach, contract monitoring and Equity, Diversity, Access, Inclusion facilitation for my region. I was recently elected as an administrative liaison for the Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network, a Washington state employee resource group that supports 2SLGBTQ+ employees. The part of my work I am most passionate about is proactively focused on equity and anti-racism. I moved to Washington to find a place where my rights as a queer, nonbinary person would be protected. While state and local laws have given me a sense of safety I lacked growing up, I recognize that there are many entrenched racist and inequitable policies that prevent others from feeling the same. My goal is to improve our state government so that all Washingtonians belong and have equitable access to state services.

I have decided to pursue an MPA because I understand that if I want to continue in my mission to be an effective public servant, I need more tools. Among the many reasons why I want to attend The Evergreen State College, the most important are its values and culture. The program's focus on social justice aligns with my motivation for working in government. The

flexibility of the course schedule with full time employment, emphasis on collaboration and the format narrative evaluations speak to a supportive, innovative, and thoughtful culture.

Furthermore, I have been deeply impressed by the helpfulness and warmth of everyone I have interacted with during the admissions process. Evergreen is the kind of community I believe in.

Thank you for your consideration. I am looking forward to taking what I learn at The Evergreen State College and applying it to my current role and the next 30 years of my public service career.