

ANY QUESTIONS PODCAST

EPISODE 5: ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

(INTRO MUSIC)

Shayna: We are listening to Any Questions. My name is Shayna, I use she/her pronouns, I am a Behavioral and Community Health Major with a minor in LGBT Studies.

Lauren: And I'm Lauren. I use she/her pronouns, and I am a double major in Art History and Studio Art. Shayna and I are peer leaders with the University Health Center. Together, with our peers, we organize programs that focus on the intersectionality between sexual health, mental health, alcohol and other drugs, and power based violence.

Shayna: And today we're going to be talking about social justice and active citizenship as a college student.

(INTRO MUSIC)

Lauren: So Shayna, there are a bunch of words I've been hearing like activism and advocacy and service and I was wondering if you could tell me about, maybe, the differences between these words and what they mean to you. Because I know that in your life, you can be an activist, or you have been an activist.

Shayna: Yeah, well first of all, thanks for saying that. I like to think that I make a difference in the world around me. And I think that's really the main thing about this thing that we call advocacy, which is just the act of supporting some type of cause or policy; something that you're passionate about. And they're all on this scale of just, or this continuum of being an active citizen. And so, we have on one end on this continuum- so it's not binary, so it's not just one option of what advocacy looks like there are a whole range of things- so on one end you have service, which is just doing an action. So you're going out, and you're putting a sticker on your water bottle or you're building houses, or you're working at a soup kitchen. Where on maybe the other end of this continuum, you have something like going to a march, or going and calling your senators, or voting, or not just going out and voting, but calling your senators and saying, here's an issue that I'm passionate about and here's the change that I want you to make. And those are all on this continuum of being an active citizen.

So the really big, I guess the difference between some of those things, is what level of passion you have toward it, what level are you just doing an action versus trying to make really a lot of change. How much is going in behind it.

Lauren: Right. And I think part of this too is how much can you balance. Especially as a student, when you have a lot of other things going around. So I was kind of wondering how you, as a student Shayna, figure out how to balance, being an active citizen. Something that I look at

and I think about you as an activist, is your water bottle. For our listeners at home, Shayna carries this beautiful, 32 ounce water bottle around with her everywhere.

(BOTH LAUGHING)

Shayna: Yeah, hydration is the key to peak performance.

(BOTH LAUGHING)

Lauren: Yeah, and it's covered in stickers. And I want Shayna to talk a little bit about that.

Shayna: Yeah, okay, sure. So I have some, you may hear me, because now I'm holding my water bottle, so you may hear some interesting sounds on the microphone. But, I have stickers for things that, different things that I'm passionate about and different things that I care about and that, for me, they're important to me in some way, shape or form. And not all of them are advocacy related, like I have some that are just for different bands that I listen to or ones that I like, but then more on the advocacy side, for me, I have ones that are from our Health Promotion and Wellness Office, which is where we're located, that are our eight dimensions of wellness. I have some that are the rainbow or the trans teeps stickers that we have on campus, because for me, health and wellness specifically for LGBT folks is really important. And then I have some other ones that relate to reproductive justice because, that's again, something that I'm really passionate and interested in. And my involvement in all of those really depends on how I'm feeling on the day. So some days, all I really can do is just have these stickers on my water bottle and I'm not going out and doing something, and that's normal. That's how it is. I'm not the only one, I'm not the only voice, I'm not the only person doing something, and no one is. And for me, it's a great way to get started. When I first came here I definitely wasn't as active as I am now, but I could always put a sticker on something and for me that was a really big first step in identifying things that I cared about or that I was passionate about. And then when I wanted to do more, I kind of knew where to go and who to contact.

Lauren: Right, okay, cool. So for someone like me, who maybe cares about a lot of things, but doesn't feel like there's a lot of time to be an advocate, per say, maybe like starting with putting a water bottle sticker, or laptop, sorry, laptop sticker on my water bottle, maybe is a good way to get that conversation going because maybe someone will see it and want to know more.

Shayna: Yeah, absolutely, exactly. And it still is on that scale of being an active citizen. And there's no correct way to care about something.

Lauren: Right. That's a good point. Yeah, so I was wondering if you can tell me some other ways that students could be advocates or active citizens.

Shayna: Yeah. I mean, for definitely things, the things that I know of, and the way that I have found a lot of this is through online searching or through finding organizations that are doing the

things that I want to be part of, and you can always contact them or reach out to them. A lot of them are run by young people and they have really active social media or websites. That's a really great way, is just contacting them. You can even look on campus. I know OrgSync right now, the online, like I don't want to say database.

Lauren: Well it is. It's like a student organization database.

Shayna: Kind of thing.

(BOTH LAUGHING)

Shayna: You can go on there and search for different clubs or organizations. Even First Look Fair, Wellness Expo, or nope that's ours, what's Wellness Expo part of?

Lauren: Um...

Both: Stamp Fest.

(BOTH LAUGHING)

Shayna: That whole thing that they have. You can always go there and look around at the clubs. But also just voting or calling your representatives or just educating yourself on what's out there and issues.

Lauren: Yeah, if you have time.

Shayna: Yeah, if you have time that's a great thing to do.

Lauren: And I think that point about educating yourself is a really big one because I think the first step to really caring about a particular issue is educating yourself on what it is. And this way you can talk about it with other people in an educated way.

Shayna: Yeah and that's another way that you can advocate, is just having a conversation. I think, again, I think that there's this whole spectrum of being an active citizen and you find yourself moving along this continuum at all different times. Sometimes, putting a sticker on your water bottle is a really big step. And for some people, that's like what they do that wouldn't be a step for them. Being on this continuum, we're doing all sorts of different things, and I guess what I'm trying to say is, being an active citizen can look different for everyone.

Lauren: Right. And this especially applies in college when there's like so much going on all the time. And something else I had a question about, was the idea of burnout. Like what if you are a student who's busy and cares about a lot of things and maybe takes too much responsibility? Has this ever happened to you?

Shayna: Oh, quite often. I really enjoy taking on a lot of things and then being like “oh no I can’t actually do all of these things.” And so now I’ve kind of had to, to avoid this burnout, or feeling like I’m overwhelmed or that I can’t do much, I really have to make sure that I, first of all, for me, that I’m surrounding myself with a community of people who are passionate about the same things because then I don’t feel like “oh my gosh, if I can’t do this, or if I don’t do it, then nothing’s going to happen.” Like having that little freak out. But also just taking care of myself, knowing that it’s okay to take breaks and to sometimes not be in that “active citizen.” Sometimes the activity that I need to do is to just sit and read a book that’s not about reproductive justice. Just sit and take care of myself.

Lauren: What’s that saying we always say at the Health Center?

Shayna: Oh Oh! Don’t pour from an empty cup.

Lauren: Yeah.

Shayna: Or you can’t pour from an empty cup.

Lauren: Yeah. It’s true though. When you’re doing too much, you can’t, you know, do your best all the time. And so it really pays to take time to yourself and recharge.

Shayna: To take breaks. I love a good break.

Lauren: Who doesn’t? So Shayna, are there any last minute things you want to say about being an active citizen that we haven’t touched on?

Shayna: I just want to stress the importance of taking care of yourself because I think sometimes, especially with issues that impact more marginalized groups or are things that we personally are really passionate about, we don’t remember to take care of ourselves. And, we’re also not the only voice and we’re not the only ones doing something and that’s why, again, it’s so important to surround yourself with community and find people either in person, or online, or both, who are doing and care about the same things that you are. Because then it’s not like the burden is all on you. Because it’s always going to feel like there’s more to do.

Lauren: Right, that’s really important. Yeah.

Shayna: So if you have any more questions, we totally invite you to come down to the ground floor of the Health Center where Health Promotion and Wellness lives. We have a few different coordinators who are always around to chat with you. If you’re passionate about health promotion and wellness, you could be an active citizen through the Health Center. There are plenty of opportunities. I mean that’s what we do in some ways.

Lauren: It's true.

Shayna: Yeah.

(BOTH LAUGHING)

Shayna: And so we have a lot of campus resources that you can find in the Health Center, online, in Stamp, all over the place. But we hope that this podcast has been helpful and maybe has inspired you to think about what you're passionate about and what kind of change you want to see in the community around you. Thank you for tuning in!

Lauren: Thank you!

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