Episode 233 – Dr. Amy Krings: Austerity Politics: What Social Workers Need to Know About Emergency Management Laws

[00:00:08] Welcome to inSocialWork. The podcast series of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work at www.inSocialWork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of inSocialWork is to engage practitioners and researchers in lifelong learning and promote research to practice and practice to research. We educate. We connect. We care. We're inSocialWork.

[00:00:38] Hello and welcome to in social work. My name is Louanne Bakk and I'll be your host for this episode. The economic recession has had a considerable effect on the financial status of state and local governments and municipalities. A common response to declining revenues has been through austerity measures including reducing public services raising taxes or implementing some form of state receivership. In this podcast Dr Amy Krings discusses the increasing use of emergency management laws as a response to the fiscal crisis and how these policies disproportionately impact individuals residing in urban communities and those who are already economically distressed. Using a multi-dimensional framework Dr. Krings research involves examining the use of emergency management practices as well as the implications for disenfranchised communities particularly poor and racial and ethnic minority populations. She provides clear and compelling examples of how these policies can have detrimental effects on the lives of urban residents. Dr. Krings also comments on the challenges that urban austerity measures present in suggest actions that social workers can take to help improve communities mitigate harm and shape public policies. She concludes by emphasizing the need to integrate content on how current policy shapes the lives of marginalized populations into social work education as it can have a direct impact on the health and well-being of minorities and the urban poor. Dr. Amy Krings is an assistant professor at Loyola University Chicago School of Social Work. Her research focuses on how members of marginalized communities come together strategically and collaboratively to advance social justice. She was interviewed in December 2017 by our own Dr. Elizabeth Bowen assistant professor here at the School of Social Work.

[00:03:03] Thank you so much for joining us today Amy and telling us about. I think you're really interesting and innovative research. So let's begin if you can just tell me a little bit more about your research.

[00:03:14] Sure I'm happy to be here. Thanks for having me. My research is mostly about how to advance social justice by engaging people who are impacted by policies and especially thinking about people whose voices are often not at the center of political conversations. A lot of my research is based in marginalized communities where people are coming together strategically and collaboratively to advance social change. And then more recently that work has danced in the cities of Detroit and Flint Michigan as well as Chicago Illinois. And then another line of my research looks at how social work education can train social change agents.

[00:03:58] I think this is a topic that we really need a lot of social work research on and research that can inform practice. And I know you recently wrote a paper about austerity urbanism. Can you tell me more about what that is?

[00:04:12] Sure. So the way to think about the word austerity is when an entity has difficulty paying its bills. So then when we talk about austerity urbanism it tends to reference local municipalities whether their cities or school districts. And so historically the way cities and school districts provide services is through taxation or the federal or state government will provide funds or provide services to local municipalities. But more and more cities struggle to provide public goods whether that means social services social workers might provide or things like even street lights trash pickup maintaining streets and things like that. So when a city or a school district cannot pay its bills

oftentimes there's a political response from either the state or the federal government intervene and in some instances they can impose laws or impose other mechanisms that forcibly tighten public spending so as to balance the budget.

[00:05:32] It's really interesting and I know you go on to argue that emergency management is a form of austerity urbanism. Can you tell me a little bit more about what is emergency management what that means for cities and how that a form of austerity.

[00:05:47] Sure. So oftentimes when people hear the phrase Emergency Management they think about natural disasters or some type of crisis lots of occurred. This is similar in the sense that when there's a financial emergency in a local municipality cannot pay its bills. There's a policy known as emergency management in which again either a federal government or state government can come in and impose a manager whose sole job is to balance the budget. So then what happens is the locally elected government whether that's the council or board or mayor they lose power and they lose authority. And instead this outside nonelected manager comes in and like I said their job is to cut programming. Most of my research has been focused in the state of Michigan which has made broad use of this particular policy. But other states have it to 16 states. And oftentimes when people hear the word austerity they think of places like Puerto Rico or even Greece where there can be rules about how governments are able to spend their money. I think this matters because what happens is the local resident even though they may vote for a mayor or vote for a city council because that person or that group of people lose their power. Consequently the residents lose the ability to hold someone accountable so that person is no longer accountable to residents but rather accountable to whom ever wanted them. In the case of Michigan that would be the governor.

[00:07:32] So you mentioned your work a lot of your work has focused on Michigan and I know some aspects of your work address other Rust Belt cities or look at these issues of emergency management and urban austerity in the context of the Rust Belt. So what kinds of issues or challenges are Rust Belt cities facing and how does urban austerity and emergency management affect the rust belt in particular?

[00:07:58] You know that's a great question. So we know that many of the challenges that cities face and particularly those in the Rust Belt. So I know you're in Buffalo and I think Buffalo would would resonate there but especially so cities in the Midwest and in the Northeast often had challenges based upon structural root causes that are often outside of the control of residents. So what I mean by that is there's been a lot of work. In particular I think of a book called The origins of the urban crisis by Thomas the group that talks about how previously industrialized cities like Detroit like Buffalo Chicago were especially hard hit after corporations decided to either relocate plants or in some cases they cut manufacturing in the city. But they became increasingly operated through robots as opposed to humans. So there was just fewer need to have a broad workforce. So with this loss of industrial employment these cities were especially hard hit. And that was especially devastating for racial minorities who had difficulty accessing other jobs and or accessing housing because of redlining policies or restrictive covenants. So over time this created highly segregated cities where in some cases there's the high proportion of people who are poor and people who are racial and ethnic minorities. And then in the suburbs there's a higher proportion of people who are more affluent were able to access different jobs and different housing opportunities and who are also disproportionately white. So this created cities that had a high concentration of need and a lesser ability to access income in the form of taxes. So just looking at the ledger is difficult to pay the bill. Additionally there used to be a higher amount of funding that came from the federal government and was invest in cities and then another factor was following the housing crisis. Again urban areas were especially hard hit. So these factors that were driven by social and political and economic forces that in some cases are global really disproportionately impacted urban areas. And so it's you know it becomes natural that city leaders have a hard time paying their bills. And so at

some point something has to give either they have to figure out new ways to raise revenue or they have to cut services. And so in the context of emergency management part of the rules to the game in that case are not allowed to raise taxes and you're not allowed to negotiate with your creditors. So the only mechanism you have is to chop services. And we know that those services are often vulnerable are those that serve politically marginalized groups. So I think about you know social welfare spending for example. And so this really matters to social work because these are the types of services that matter to people with whom we work. They matter for our own employment. And oftentimes you know there are issues of justice. You want to have equitable spending. I think these are the reasons that it matters to social work.

[00:11:41] I think what you just said is really important because when we hear about other cities that are under emergency management laws I think it would be easy to assume that spurred the city or the political leadership was mismanaging funds or that it wasn't good governance or something like this. But I think your work points to the fact that it's not that simple and that we need to remember to look structurally at some of these other causes and other factors that are often beyond any leader or politicians control but that have really affected some of these cities where this austerity and these emergency management practices are taking place.

[00:12:20] Yeah I think you're exactly right. But see if you think about just the theory of change within this policy it implies that by putting in someone who's external in a quote unquote expert that that will solve the problems. So you're exactly right. This implies that the reason cities are so challenged to balance their budget is a consequence of poor decision making by leaders. So if if that was true it makes sense then to bring in someone who's unelected who can impose top down decisions to balance the budget. But the problem is you know we know that as a consequence of many social and political changes over time. I mean you could have the most brilliant person in terms of managing a budget. And the reality is there's just less income coming in and there's higher need. So just thinking about the theory of emergency management. One of the things that we argue we being my collaborators Sean Lee at the University of Michigan one of the things that Shauna and I have argued is that emergency management does not address these structural issues. And so consequently even though many of these decisions have been made well beyond the border of the city the hardships associated with fighting the budget are passed along to people who live there who also now don't have local elected leaders with power to defend them and to defend their interests.

[00:14:07] So speaking of how this affects the constituents of a city or the residents of a city that's under emergency management I think you spoke to some of the ways in which this matters for social work and the populations that social workers often work with. And I know some of your research looks at some of the racial disparities in terms of how more racial minorities are more likely to live under emergency management laws. Can you talk a little bit more about your research that looks at that.

[00:14:37] Sure. My collaborator on that paper is Shawna Lee of the University of Michigan. So just some background about that paper, Shawna was teaching a social welfare policy class at Michigan. And the students had the opportunity to choose an issue of interest and they had a group project. So one of the groups opted to examine emergency management. So actually I'm kind of proud of this paper not only because of its findings but also the process. So to answer the question about if there is racial inequality in the way that emergency management is implemented my collaborator Shawna and I looked at census data and we found that within the state of Michigan African-Americans comprise 14 percent of the entire population. Yet compared to their total population in Michigan 51 percent of African-Americans in Michigan were under emergency management. At some point between 2008 and 2013. So in other words more than half of African-Americans who live in Michigan at some point lived under emergency management. In contrast Latinos or Hispanics in Michigan comprise 4 percent of the overall population yet of Latinos and

Hispanics. In Michigan 16 percent of them lived under emergency management. Now in contrast white residents who make up 76 percent of the population only had 2 percent of whites lived under emergency management. So just to repeat that of all African-Americans 51 percent lived under emergency management of Latinos 16 percent lived under emergency management. And of all whites two point four percent lived under emergency management. Another way to think about those numbers. Ten percent of all residents lived under emergency management at some point. So of the people that lived under emergency management 70 percent were African-American 7 percent were Hispanic or Latino and 18 percent were white. So in other words we found a large sum large disparities in terms of who is impacted by these policies on the basis of race. And again you know we want to remind people that the history of social policy in the United States has shaped the composition of cities in ways that are far beyond just individual decisions. So we think that when we look at those gaps. One thing you have to remember again is the history of redlining and concentrating people of color within cities as well as having less access to jobs. And as I said industrial employment so emergency management is effectively putting the blame on those residents for these structural issues rather than looking at broader issues including things like structural racism.

[00:17:51] I think that's a great point about these very stark racial disparities. And I agree with that conclusion you make in your research that even though policies and practices such as emergency management may sometimes be described as race neutral they really are not. Not possible to defend the idea that they are race neutral.

[00:18:12] Exactly. And again it matters because it disenfranchises the people who live under management in the sense that they have a mayor they have a city council. But those positions are symbolic. The emergency measure ultimately has the ability to hire and fire to renegotiate contracts including to terminate or modify agreements with organized labor and again their main tool is effectively capful of changing the way that that municipality spends money. So there's almost this theory of social change that by shopping social services somehow will we're going to strengthen these cities. And so Shawna and I looked at for people who live under emergency management. To what degree are these changes influencing for example the quality of education in Detroit Public Schools or a different study that I worked on was actually looking at the Flint water crisis which some people don't realize emerged under a context of emergency management.

[00:19:28] Those seem like some very clear examples of ways in which these policies end up having very practical and I imagine detrimental effects on residents lives in a variety of ways. Can you tell me more about what sparked your interest in this topic?

[00:19:44] I did my dissertation at the University of Michigan and it was a four year political ethnography where I immersed myself in a neighborhood in Southwest Detroit called Delray. The thing I was studying was a case where there was a proposal to build a new international border crossing between Windsor Canada in Detroit Michigan. And the proposal was that that border is where that bridge would land directly in Delray. So the people that lived there were very concerned about the place they were concerned about environmental impacts especially caused by diesel pollution from some trucks coming through their neighborhood. So one of the things that the hood did was organize to pursue something called a and the benefits agreement which is a tool. The idea is that if there's a new development that comes into a neighborhood there should be some mechanism to guarantee that some of those investments go to residents and also that residents are protected from harm. So just to give you a sense of some of the things that residents of Delray were asking for for those who would be displaced they wanted fair compensation for their housing and for those that would be left behind that would now have an international border crossing in their neighborhood. They wanted things like assurances that the air quality would be monitored. They wanted assurances that there would be appropriate buffers between the crossing and their houses.

So trees that would try to mitigate some of the dust and pollution and noise and they wanted access to some of the jobs that were going to come. So I studied this group for several years and it was very inspiring because Delray is a very low income community is primarily composed of people of color and they were trying to have a voice inside the decision that involves no international government they're trying to put pressure on Canada and the United States. The state of Michigan as well as the province of Ontario. And it was almost late in some instances they would sort of take two steps forward and one step back they would make political claims they would gain some degree of attention and leverage and then somehow again and again their interests were kind of deep prioritized set aside. So I'm saying all that to say that when I started my dissertation it was not intended to be about emergency management. Over time one of the things that really became a challenge for the Delray crew was the city was having a hard time paying this bill. And so the state's governor appointed an emergency manager which effectively reduced the power of their city council and their mayor. And again that emergency manager. Their mission is to cut spending. So it was in this context that the the bridge is going to be built. And there was a need to purchase publicly owned land from the city of Detroit in order to create the space to build the bridge. So one of the things that the Delray residents argued was that when that land is purchased from the city they wanted some of those proceeds to be reinvested into their neighborhood. So again like if the city is profiting from that particular land there was an interest that people who lived there who would be burdened by this development would have some types of protection. And the city council was in agreement and the mayor was in agreement. So they sort of moving forward in that way. But the emergency manager has a different set of interests. So rather than being accountable to the local residents his job is to pay down debt. So he wanted that money to go into a broader general fund pay off creditors and to to balance the budget so ultimately Delray had made these steps forward in terms of influencing their political leaders. But they were unable to influence the emergency manager. And so then consequently those signs that came from the sale of land were not accessible at the Delray community. And so once again they were kind of undermined in their campaign to seek local protection. Now over time the city went through its bankruptcy and it now has the mayor again. It has a city council and they actually have been able to negotiate some spending and protections within that neighborhood. But in the context of Emergency Management they just not have political power in order to make claims. So one of the things that Shauna and I point out is this racial inequality matters for many reasons. It has consequences just in terms of the right to vote for your your vote matter. But it also has consequences in terms of how we spend money and who pays and who profits when we think about balancing budgets. So you could have made an argument that a more appropriate policy would be to hold accountable banks that had a role in the foreclosures in Detroit but sort of those groups get let off the hook and instead it was people who lived in places like Delray that really had to tighten their belts under emergency management.

[00:25:30] I think that's a really moving story about community empowerment and some gains that were made despite the constraints that emergency management placed on the city of Detroit and specifically on the political power of this community of Delray. Can you tell me a little more about theoretical frameworks shape this area of inquiry for you.

[00:25:51] Sure. Well most of my work is engage as I said within social justice. So for me when I think about what that looks like you want to look both at a decision making process and who's included. Who decides who benefit. Who pays as well as outcome. So is there a fair distribution of goods. So to that and some of the work I've done has looked more at the participation in other words people impacted by policies. I think social workers we believe in self-determination. So if you're directly impacted by a policy I would argue at least that you should have a right to influence the shape of that policy. I tend to make that argument from that the cold should perspective but there's also a good reason for people impacted to have a role in shaping decisions. Often times they have good information that can lead to better policies are included for example. So we engage with theories of participation. We also engage with theories of power so both explicit power instances

where you can look at votes for example and think about who decides in the context of a formal political arena. But power also manifests in how we shape political agendas. So in other words one way to think about why emergency management matters is not just because of curtailing voting but it even decides what types of issues we can even consider in take up for discussion. So in other words emergency management and austerity measures broadly immediately remove from the conversation and have a policy that might require additional spending. They just say it's not possible. And so it puts people like social workers that are trying to secure a stronger social safety net. It immediately removes us from the conversation or at least from that conversation. So you're put immediately in a defensive posture of trying to defend spending and removed from the ability try to grow the social safety net. So I think those types of policies shed light on the character of power within municipalities and how that can reproduce racial and class disparities.

[00:28:24] I appreciate how you think about these issues on multiple levels and thinking about participation and social workers. Sometimes I think we tend to think about these things mainly at an individual level. But your work seems to show how it's important to think about self-determination for example not just in the context of something making decisions about their own life but in terms of their ability to participate in the political process and shape the policies that are going to affect them most. So I think that shows us the importance of being ecological and looking through these multi-dimensional lenses. Can you tell me more about what you learned through the process of doing this research?

[00:29:06] Well maybe before I do that I can just mention that you know I agree. And I think that sometimes there's a full divide between micro and macro. So what I saw were instances where people come together in an interest in advancing policy not just for the sake of government but in a way to protect their own health or the health of their children. So sometimes there are individual motivations around one's own health and well-being that cannot be addressed without looking at root causes shaped by policy. But what I saw was when people come together in a collective way to try to advance the well-being of their community and their families that can have really positive changes in somebody's self-esteem and well-being. So I think there's a false divide in many cases between micro and macro. In some instances of course I didn't measure things like self efficacy but you know it makes sense to me it makes intuitive sense to me that there may be instances where if someone is depressed or experiencing anxiety or isolation perhaps a good intervention is to join a community group where you're part of a team and you're making claims collectively as opposed to only having some type of individual intervention. So I mean I guess what I'm saying is I saw outcomes that were positive that individual community and policy levels the part of this research and the other thing I saw was even though I know I'm painting in such a negative picture about urban austerity or the world today and particularly around emergency management I also saw many examples of resistance in people who are quite clever in still trying to find different political opening in trying to assert their claims despite having so many political constraints.

[00:31:18] And I think this really speaks to the idea that we heard the phrase the personal is political and we could also think of the reverse of that too that the political is personal for people in very meaningful ways. What additional questions did the research lead you to consider?

[00:31:36] So there were two studies that really followed the study about emerge management. So one as I said was with two collaborators. Their names are Deena Kornberg and Aaron Lane They're both doctoral students at the University of Michigan. And so we started looking at the Flint water crisis and we were curious about how despite these serious constraints in terms of emergency management as well as being a poor city and a city that was largely composed of communities of color how were residues able to ultimately convince the government in a delayed way but ultimately convinced their government to switch their water source back to the Detroit based water system as a way to protect their families from really dangerous water that was collected from the

Flint water system. So one was looking at these strategies of resistance in Flint and then another one was looking again I collaborated with Shawna on that one as well as to MSW students here at Loyola Chicago. Their names are LaDonna Miller and Hilary Thomas. As well as the MSW Jeanette at Michigan and Ayoub Ali. So the five of us looked at parents whose children attended Detroit Public Schools. And our goal was to try to just understand their perspective what it was like to make decisions about their children's education within a context of you enjoyment. So those were two studies that sort of followed.

[00:33:20] I'll be curious to hear about what your findings are as Those papers come out and that's that research progress as you've described to a lot of the challenges that urban austerity and emergency management practices present. What actions are efficacy efforts? Can social workers take to meet these challenges?

[00:33:39] So again I think this is when we can start as a profession thinking really holistically. So you know the reality if we take the case of Del Ray there will be additional pollution in that community and that has many implications in terms of people's health specifically around asthma and other respiratory issues. It also has implications in terms of their mental health. So like living with uncertainty about if your breathing toxins for example can really take a toll on someone's well-being. So there certainly are opportunities to intervene in terms of mitigating harm in terms of physical health as well as mental health. But I think these cases also demonstrate the necessity to also look at root causes and think and social action and advocacy. And I think again that matters both in terms of making sure there are pathways for people who are impacted to assert themselves to have self determination and political empowerment. But it also has to do with changing policies that we have a strong social safety net that includes things such as environmental regulation investments in urban areas because you know even though I think these stories the dull race stories the flint story are very inspiring in terms of showing how people can be clever and resilient and powerful to be honest. The fight is not fair. They shouldn't have to fight for clean water or clean air. So I argue that we need to have a rigorous strong social safety net if we're serious about reducing inequalities including environmental inequalities. And then last the role of philanthropy in foundations was important in the Flint and Detroit stories. So when we think about our graduates in social work practitioners that shape agendas of foundation that I think foundations also have an important role to play in shaping policy and ensuring that local voices are included in not just in symbolic ways but that those voices actually have influence and are seen as experts so that expertise is not solely viewed as you know someone with a higher degree coming in from outside.

[00:36:15] I agree that that's always important to keep in mind that there's a lot of different forms of expertise and I think there's also sometimes an assumption that getting involved in policy or in advocacy is only for community organizers or for certain kinds of social workers. And I think what you've just explained is a good reminder that there is really room for social workers in all kinds of roles and all levels of practice and all practice settings. And to think about these issues and think about how it affects the people that we work with and think about what we can do and what the people and the communities that we work with can do and how we can empower them to be able to take action.

[00:36:54] I also think it matters for people like you are either or are engaged in research. You know the people in Delray know that the air quality is that there and they know that in part because they get a headache they have dust in their home. But the way we set up policies. You almost need an external academic who is credentialed to come in to quote unquote prove that the air quality is not good and similar in Flint. You know people talked about for months their eyes would burn when they would take a shower their hair was falling out. They were getting pneumonia in the summer. They knew that the water was not safe. And again it took alliances with external groups including Virginia as well as the local pediatrician to run scientific tests and who could quote

unquote prove that yes indeed the water was not safe. And I think that's frustrating. I think it's unfair. I think there's work to do in terms of thinking about how to credential residents but in the meantime in that context we also want to think about the importance of doing community engaged research in a way that again privileges lived experiences of people and helps to amplify their voices as well as to disseminate information about people's experiences. And again I don't think that's fair. I think the ideal would be that when a group of moms in Flint describe their children getting sick that we take that seriously and intervene immediately. But until that happens there's also an important role for community engaged researchers to be appropriate allies into on her no lived experiences and local claim.

[00:38:52] That was one thing that really stuck with me reading some of your work about Flint about how people in the community seemed to feel that while they were certainly very appreciative of the partnerships they were able to build with the local pediatrician and with experts from Virginia Tech that they felt that when these stories eventually were reported in the media a lot of it really hailed those outside experts as the heroes in the story and to celebrate the contributions of the community or the activism of the community in the same way as they did celebrate the expertise of these these outside experts that came in and that sticks with me as a researcher as something to try to Respect that Indigenous expertise and try to change that narrative a little bit of the researcher as the hero or as even the expert psychically.

[00:39:48] And I think to be fair to the scholars in those cases I think they were uncomfortable being portrayed as heroes as well and I think they did attempt to push back and say journalist that neglected the hard work of residents for so long. But I just think you know again media by and large did not show up in Flint and take those concerns seriously until after the crisis was exposed and after the city declared a state of emergency. So if you kind of show up after the action and push has happened I think there was at least an impulse to kind of minimize the impact of residents. And again you know a lot of the time the people who were most engaged in Flint were moms that didn't necessarily see themselves as political activists. They just saw themselves as wanting to have clean water for their kids. And I think they were really mad that they had to go to a city council repeatedly and go to the state capitol repeatedly to try to protect their kids. I think both the paper that I wrote with Dana Kornberg and Erin Lane as well as a piece by Derrick Jackson have argued it wasn't just the state government and the EPA that was downplaying the claims of Flint residents. The media as well had a role to just credential local people. So I think a promising field or a promising intervention for social workers to think about what would it look like to think of people that live in marginalized areas not simply as recipients of services but as expert in claims makers people that are empowered and should be involved in shaping decisions. I mean even within nonprofits thinking about like what would it look like to have stronger influence from people with whom we work in a way that they're not just sort of like recipients that receive services that have been deemed appropriate by external acts.

[00:42:16] I agree that's a very important shift for social work and even for society at large. So what's next for you in terms of your research agenda.

[00:42:26] I'm gonna continue looking at resistance within conditions of urban austerity but I've also been interested in looking at people in models that seem to be getting that right. A colleague of mine here at Loyola named Maria Vidaldeheim. She and I have been advancing some research based in Chicago public schools about a model of peer engagement where parents receive a small stipend for their time and are able to volunteer with in public schools. And so then they do that Monday through Thursday and then on Friday they receive training and that training ranges from things like how to manage classrooms. But it goes into even skills associated with political and community engagement. And so far the preliminary findings have been really exciting because oftentimes the participants who are typically moms talk about how they just felt like they didn't

really have any reason to engage in schools. Maybe they felt they didn't have strong academic training and so they felt nervous about what it was worth that they might bring into the classroom. And you can kind of trace their how their voices change and self-image changes over time as they become more strong helping out teachers within the classroom. And as that like degree of efficacy and confidence transforms even into their community. So then they would tell stories about things like how their neighbors start to see them as experts in resources. So like when the street light goes out they know to go to this particular woman for help because she understands things like how the city work. So it was actually a pretty exciting model that demonstrated how to build actual meaningful leadership over time with women who've traditionally felt ignored or even felt like their own lack of self-esteem or what they might bring to educational policy or community issues. So I want to keep looking at not just these problems but also thinking more about what meaningful interventions might look like and then the other piece of research I've been thinking more about is also based here in Chicago and it's looking again at a neighborhood group based in a neighborhood called Little Village that's been successful in a number of cases with advancing environmental justice campaigns. So for example they were able to shut down a coal plant. They were able to secure funding for additional park space and green spaces. But now their approach is starting to shift. They've they've achieved a number when. And their fear is that they're doing such a good job that they're making their neighborhood more and more desirable for people to live and their fear has become that the rents are going up. So my collaborator whose name is Tanya Schussler Tanya and I met with some of the organizers at the community organization and it was really fascinating because they're now in a position of actually trying to influence a proposal by the city to build a new bike paths and they're even thinking about opposing the bike path. And again for me as someone who studied environmental justice campaigns on the surface you would think you know there's a lack of green spaces. You would think that an environmental justice group would support a bike path. But their fear is again if there are things green amenities that come in that it will raise the rents to such an extent that it sort of gentrifies the neighborhood and then more affluent people move in and then the low income folks that had been living there are pushed out possibly into another neighborhood that also has environmental challenges. So we've been writing about that phenomenon is called environmental gentrification in trying to think about what her policies and community programs might exist to make it so people have a right to green spaces and that they have a right to clean air and that they aren't displaced as a result of those types of winds. Those are sort of some of the questions that I see myself asking in the near future. But again all of this is geared towards the advancement of social justice.

[00:47:09] That's really fascinating. Both of those topics and both seem like they have a lot of potential implications for practice and for community development and best practices in organizing and then models for participation and engagement. So I can see a lot of relevance and implications of your research. Is there anything else that you would like to add to our conversation today?

[00:47:36] You know I just I feel excited as a social work educator these days. I've noticed here at Loyola. Many of my students come in with an inclination of wanting to do clinical social work. And I I support that I think we need strong clinicians. And I noticed that my students reject these sort of false divides between micro and macro practice in a way that I think some educators were actually behind the times in that way. I think my students see quite clearly how policy impacts them as social workers as well as just human beings. And they think that they clearly see how policy shapes and in some cases reproduces inequalities. And I think they understand that to be good social workers you need to mitigate harm and empower people and need to think about these root causes. So I think it's an exciting time to be a social worker and to be a social work educator. I feel really optimistic for our profession. And I think like you know students are hungry to understand root causes. You know they're curious why there are certain neighborhoods in Detroit or Flint or Chicago that 50 years ago were quite vibrant. They are really suffering. And I think they don't buy the notion that it's simply because of individual lack of interest or lack of intelligence. I think you

know they get excited understanding how policy has in some cases shaped who benefits and who pays in terms of who we invest in and where we invest. Things like that. So anyway I think this kind of work I think is very promising. I think it helps to make for better social work practitioners. It makes for interesting classroom conversations. And I think the research is really important too. So I feel excited for our profession going forward.

[00:49:48] Absolutely. Thank you so much Amy for sharing your very interesting and very impactful Research and Social Work Education perspectives with us.

[00:49:59] Well I'm a fan of the podcast and I'm thankful for the opportunity.

[00:50:04] Great. Thank you.

[00:50:06] You've been listening to Dr. Amy Krings discuss the challenges and effects of urban austerity and emergency management practices. I'm Louanne Bakk. Please join us again and in social work.

[00:50:27] Hi I'm Nancy Smyth Professor and Dean of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. We look forward to your continued support of the series. For more information about who we are as a school our history or online and on the ground degree and continuing education programs we invite you to visit our website at www.SocialWork.buffalo.edu. And while you're there check out our technology and social work
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