Washington State JEWISH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Tana Senn

SUMMARY

As a working mom with two kids, Tana Senn brings an important perspective to legislative issues, advocating for busy families and seeking solutions to prevent crises before they occur. Her grandparents were Holocaust survivors who relocated to Kenya before coming to the United States. Tana was raised in the Los Angeles suburb of Pacific Palisades and went on to earn a Master's Degree in Public Policy and Administration from Columbia University in 1996. After graduate school, she was hired by National Hadassah, rising to the position of American Affairs/Domestic Policy Director. Moving from New York to Washington State in 2000, she worked as a communications consultant for nonprofits and as the marketing director for the Jewish Federation. In 2012, she became a Mercer Island City Councilmember and a State Representative in 2013, fighting for legislation to close the gender pay gap and working to establish common-sense gun laws.

CONTENT WARNING: This interview discusses themes of gun violence.

Jeff Schwager: Go for about half an hour. Probably a little longer if you talk a lot, but which would be great. I don't discourage that. Okay. I'm going to take a little water here. So tell me where you just were.

Tana Senn: I was just at Mercer Island High School for the National School Walkout. So they participated or over probably over 400 kids that came out into the amphitheater. And they invited me to speak, and they read the names of all the students killed in Parkland, Florida. And they recounted some of the school shootings since then, even, and read poems and talked about their fear of guns and how much they hate assault weapons. And it was such a powerful moment. Really inspiring.

Jeff Schwager: And what did you tell them?

Tana Senn: I told them that they have power and that their generation has the power to influence the economy and influence the way America looks at gun culture, and implored them to not let America think that brandishing a gun makes you look brave and cool. To ask friends and parents if they have a gun to lock it up. That that could save their own lives too. And to never let their voices be diminished and to always vote. So those are probably the biggest messages.

Jeff Schwager: Mhm. Good.

Tana Senn: Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: I like what you said about not looking cool. It reminds me of how people talked about smoking when I was in school. And there's been such a decrease in smoking. And I think that's a really important point to make is that it doesn't make you cool.

Tana Senn: Mhm. Yeah. I love it. I think there's that analogy to to guns. In fact in the legislature this past session, a bill came up to move the voting age from 18 to not the voting age to smoking age from 18 to 21. And, you know, I would say that most the Democrats supported it. However, it was like right after Parkland and we were like, so we're going to move the smoking age from 18 to 21 because we think that might kill you, but we're not going to move the assault weapons age from 18 to 21. And it just it

didn't pass the smell test of like, really because cigarettes are so much more dangerous than assault weapons.

Jeff Schwager: Right?

Tana Senn: So we we we did it weeks later.

Jeff Schwager: But, um, and so what's happening with guns in the legislature right now? I know that's an issue that you have written about and talked about. Um, tell me what's happening.

Tana Senn: Yeah. So we did ban bump stocks in this legislative session, which was a small step, an important step. But it's pretty difficult right now to pass other sensible gun laws. Um, the Democrats have a couple seat majority in both the House and in the Senate, and we have some rural Democrats and some conservative Democrats who don't, you know, believe in in banning guns and or in registries or things like that. And so it's, um, it's kind of on the border whether or not a bill would pass. And this past session, it was a short session. And so we had a lot of other things to do. And the the opponents of gun control usually get pretty ramped up on the floor. And they'll talk kind of filibuster talk for hours. And so we can only kind of select selectively run those bills or everything else, you know, doesn't have a chance to pass. So, um.

Jeff Schwager: So even assault weapons is not something that can get through.

Tana Senn: We didn't even have a vote on it.

Jeff Schwager: Wow.

Tana Senn: Nope. I mean, I had a bill to allow the Washington State Patrol The option to destroy weapons that have been forfeited from a crime scene, or in other ways, like every other law enforcement agency already has across the state. They already have that ability to destroy. We didn't even get a vote on that.

Jeff Schwager: That's amazing. Um, so what do you do with your colleagues who are against an assault weapons ban, which seems to someone like me who's just a guy, the most common sense thing in the world, to say that we don't want other people to have more powerful weapons than the police have. If nothing else, we don't want the police to come up against somebody who's better armed than they are. What if you have a Democratic colleague who is opposed to an assault weapons ban? What? What do you do? Do you oppose your colleague?

Tana Senn: No. I think it's important to recognize that people are multidimensional Chanel and, um, and that. I do think litmus tests for anything is is tough. And you know, for a couple of the I would say maybe the two probably the two in the House of Representatives right now, um, you know, they're amazing on so many other issues on reproductive choice, on labor issues, on the environment, on, you know, other things that are really important as well. And so I think we just need bigger majorities so that people have the flexibility to be, um, to have a different opinion and not just have groupthink in on every issue. And I think we need to be flexible in that way. Just right now with a 1 or 2 seat majority, it's pretty frustrating not to not to have that.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. Okay. Sorry. I didn't mean to ambush you. No gun issue?

Tana Senn: No, it's totally fine.

Jeff Schwager: It just happens to be a pet issue of mine. Well, especially.

Tana Senn: I mean, you know, I was involved with the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle in 2006 when there was the shooting there. So, I mean, the gun issues are immensely personal and immensely important to me. Um, and I, I feel like I can bring an interesting perspective in that way. I'm not exactly a gun survivor, gun violence survivor. But, um, you know, when people talk. So with the Washington State Patrol bill that I had to allow them to destroy them. The opponents are concerned that, well, those guns could be used to could be sold, and then that money could be used to buy other equipment or things like that for the for the law enforcement agencies. And, you know, to me, I just say to them, I'm like, so they might get maybe $500 max per weapon. It's like if one of those weapons is used in a crime, you have the 911, the expenses of 911, the Swat team, the police and first responders who come, hospital emergency rooms, surgeons, nurses. You've got criminal justice costs. You have jail costs, you have lost wages. You have workman's compensation. You have mental anguish and therapy for, you know, dozens of people circularly out from the victim. You have like all of the not to mention if a life is lost, the loss of that life. And so the cost of one gun crime versus the cost of one gun is just it's I mean, it's completely unbalanced. And so that's how I try and talk about it. If they're going to argue against it because of money, I'll argue right back about money, because I've seen and in the case of the Jewish Federation, the other thing was billions of dollars added to homeland security for religious institutions because of that shooting. So it was, uh, it was a nationally devastating and financially ruinous, uh, you know, incident, not to mention just the personal and the, the

community fear that it created and the anguish and the tragic loss of lives and of health for so many people.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. It was devastating. Yeah. Um. Well, you are truly an agent of change every day, working in the legislature and, um, passing laws and getting things done in the state. And nothing could be more important than that. So thank you for doing that. Thank you. And congratulations on being chosen as an agent of change.

Tana Senn: Thank you. I'm thrilled.

Jeff Schwager: Um, let's talk about you a little bit in your background. Um, where are you from? Uh, what did you do to get to where you are? And just tell me about yourself.

Tana Senn: Okay. I grew up in Southern California. Where, uh, in Pacific Palisades, which is the Los Angeles area.

Jeff Schwager: I grew up in Santa Monica.

Jeff Schwager: Oh, did you really? No, I went to Pali High.

Tana Senn: Yeah. That's awesome.

Jeff Schwager: We're rivals.

Tana Senn: Yes. Oh. That's awesome. Well, so then, you know. Well, um. And so now I live on Mercer Island, which is actually somewhat many similarities to Pacific Palisades. Uh, ironically, um, I grew up actually in a household. My mom, um, was the daughter of Holocaust survivors. So a granddaughter and great granddaughter of Holocaust survivors. So my grandparents had very heavy accents. And, um, and my grandmother was my great grandmother was an important influence on my life as well. And she had a number on her arm and the whole bit from Auschwitz and, um, and a few other camps and ghettos. Uh, and they had relocated from Kenya. They were refugees. Um, my grandparents escaped where my grandmother went to the concentration camps, my grandparents escaped and ended up through a very circuitous route in Kenya. So my mom was born and raised in Kenya. So, um, it was very interesting growing up with a kind of an international mom and a politically active dad, he was roommates with Michael Dukakis and Senator Carl Levin. And so kind of community involvement and standing up for those, you know, for immigrants and those poorly treated and facing discrimination were a big part. Uh, I would say of of our lives. We went to college in Saint Louis and then grad school in New York, and lived in New York City for six years. And, um, and ended up coming out to Seattle in 2000 for work and for politics and, um, and never left. And, um, Seattle is definitely home.

Jeff Schwager: That's great.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Um, what did you, uh, take away from your your your grandparents, who were Holocaust survivors? Uh, what? Tell me some lessons you learned from them.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah.

Tana Senn: So, for my great grandmother, I would say she was the most positive, loving person who didn't hold a grudge against anyone. And, um, just just loved her family and was just so glad to have been reunited with her family. Um, my grandparents and my my grandmother, I think, probably has some survivor's guilt. Mhm. And, um, but we're amazing active Jews in Santa Barbara, um, where they moved to in Ojai, California, when they moved to the United States. My grandfather was an architect and built the synagogue in Nairobi. Yes, that stands today. So, uh, and their last name is Rodger. And you can see in the design of the synagogue roses, um, for in, uh, that connection. So, uh, you know, very strong connections there. Um, what probably my favorite story about them is in, uh, in 1980, I believe 80, 81, 82, they became US citizens. And so they were in their late 70s, and it was the first time in their entire lives that they had ever been a citizen of a country where they could vote. So they had growing up in Czechoslovakia and Hungary, I think they, you know, they were Jews. They're not considered full citizens. And they were young. But, um, and then they escaped and were refugees. And when they resettled in Kenya, they were, you know, refugees there and had never had the right to vote. So it wasn't until they were in their late 70s that they ever lived in a country where they could vote, and that was super powerful. And my grandmother, who died at 94, never missed an election. New policy issues. She could talk you under the table on what was going on locally, nationally, internationally. She read international newspapers all the time. And so, you know, I definitely think that that was ingrained in me that do not take that vote for granted.

Jeff Schwager: Mhm. That's great. And you were passing that message on to the kids in Mercer Island today.

Jeff Schwager: I was.

Jeff Schwager: How wonderful. Yeah. Um, were you raised in an observant household?

Tana Senn: Uh, Reconstructionist, actually, uh, Reconstructionist synagogue. Uh, I was bat mitzvahed. Um, my, you know, I don't know if my dad was bar mitzvahed. I know my mom was not, but she sang in the choir at synagogue and they were, um, so we attended, you know, regularly and, you know, like, I think a lot of people and probably a lot of California Jews, the havurah was very, very important to us. So we had a number of Jewish families that we got together with for all the holidays and who are still, um, a couple of the families came to my son's bar mitzvah from California and will come to my daughter's bat mitzvah. So at least the parents. And so that was something that we try and emulate here as well.

Jeff Schwager: Um.

Jeff Schwager: And what about Jewish values? Were there any that anything that you would identify as a specifically Jewish value that resonated with you?

Tana Senn: Um, I think the and I talk about it a lot when people say, why are you in public service? And I think a lot of things that we read in during Yom Kippur who say, you know, for the sins that we have committed against you by being xenophobic, by not taking care of the poor, by not looking out for the widow and the orphan, for, you know, those different components, for some reason, just really resonate with me, that we are just constantly looking or told and encouraged to look out for those who are less fortunate than us. And I think that that's, um, something that not everybody has as a core value. Um, I think maybe has.

Jeff Schwager: I can think of one person who doesn't have that as a core.

Jeff Schwager: Value. Yes.

Tana Senn: And so that kind of that empathy of, you know, imagine being in their shoes. And so I think that for me is definitely the something that resonates.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. What did you study in college? In grad school.

Tana Senn: As an education major in college. And I really wanted to be a teacher. And then I spent a summer in Washington, DC doing education policy, and I started kind of getting more into the policy area and then started understanding a little bit more about how urban policy impacts education policy, whether kids walk to school not feeling safe or if they're hungry. Um, and so got a little bit more into the urban policy. And I when I went to Columbia for grad school, I got my master's in public policy and administration and did a lot of studying in urban policy and in gender policy. And, um, as well as accounting and microeconomics and some of those other, uh, other components. So after graduate school, I, I could see myself either going down the route of working on empowerment zones, which are very focused on urban cities and revitalizing cities. Or I could follow my kind of women's and Jewish passion route, which is what I ended up doing. And I went to work for a national Hadassah right out of grad school. So I was there. I was in their American Affairs domestic policy department and working on women's health issues and voter registration. In 1994, there was the Million Mom March for Gun Safety or to Fight Guns back then organized a number of buses from around the country to come to that reproductive health issues again, women's health issues, pro-Israel issues. So it was quite a kind of a perfect place for me to land.

Jeff Schwager: Um hum.

Jeff Schwager: That's great. And so you were always intent on working for the public good. It sounds like.

Jeff Schwager: I think I really.

Tana Senn: I definitely was between, you know, whether it was going to be an education or be a teacher. Um, and just as an aside, bless my mom's heart, she said, you know, you can't be a teacher. It's not safe and you get paid so little. I was like, what do you mean it's not safe? She's like, teachers are getting shot because I think, like, literally one teacher in LA had been shot. I mean, talk about the foresight that my mom had. Um, yeah. Uh.

Jeff Schwager: But an armed teacher today.

Tana Senn: I have to say, I got the biggest applause when I said, and do not arm our teachers. And all the kids started cheering. So that was good. Yeah. Crazy. Um, yeah. So, yeah, I do think I've had a had a public bent.

Jeff Schwager: Um, so how do you keep your optimism up today, given the world we live in? And you can talk specifically about any particular people.

Tana Senn: That.

Jeff Schwager: You'd like to, or you could just talk generally about that.

Tana Senn: So when Trump was elected, so many people were depressed as I was and so many people were depressed and people kept saying, thank you for your service, thank you for your service. And I have to say, being in public service and being an elected official was probably my saving grace because I felt like I was actively doing something to counter some of the bad policies and, and bad, um, kind of gestalt that there was in the country. And so I was actively able to be working towards change. And for me, that kept me sane.

Jeff Schwager: Um.

Tana Senn: And so I think being able to be part of the solution is gives me some optimism. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. Um, in your professional life and in your career, have you had any special role models, people you looked up to, mentors, anyone you'd like to call out? Especially women. Since, uh, we're looking at women who are agents of change.

Tana Senn: Yeah. Well, funnily enough, um, I used to when people would ask me that question of who are your female role models? Ann Richards, who was the former governor of Texas, was somebody I always talked about, but I think fewer and fewer people are remembering who she was. Um, but I think as a, as a young girl, just seeing this vivacious, dynamic, uh, Dolly Parton esque woman in Texas as a Democrat, being all fiery was really inspirational. Um, I would say closer to home. And more recently, uh, Representative Judy Clyburn and Representative Ruth Kagi are two state representatives who are actually retiring this year. Who are people call them the mother of the state's children. For Ruth Kagi, because she really focused on early learning, uh, issues. And she has been an amazing role model. And representative Clyburn, Judy Clyburn, just her bipartisan work and her her success through relationships has been very instrumental, I think, in how I've been developing my my policy work in terms of, yeah, you can jam something through if we're in control, but working in a bipartisan manner usually leads to better policy and better results and more long term buy in. And so that has been she's been an amazing role model as well.

Jeff Schwager: Um, good. Just, um, look through my notes here, I want to. Tell me about some other issues, uh, besides guns that have been most important to you in your work in the legislature?

Tana Senn: Well, for sure, this year, I would say the biggest accomplishment and probably the most important to me, was passing our equal pay legislation. My equal pay legislation, I know thinking about for years for this particular bill, and it's taken 75 years since we've passed any equal pay legislation in Washington state. And so, uh, it was about time the economy has changed just a bit between now and back then. And so that was really exciting. The first few years were kind of convincing people that we really needed to address equal pay and then building support, and then getting down to the brass tacks of the, um, making sure the words were all right. And, and working with business and women's groups and labor labor groups. Overall for years, but especially this past year, intently to really get it to a point where it was not only good policy. Well, not only was good messaging and good goal, but good policy. And so I'm very excited with its passage just a couple weeks ago. So that was definitely, uh, without a doubt, a highlight of my career, I will imagine. I'm just going to guess it's going to be definitely a long term highlight.

Jeff Schwager: Congratulations.

Tana Senn: Thank you, thank you.

Jeff Schwager: Any other special issues you'd like to talk about?

Tana Senn: Absolutely. So probably the other major issue that I've worked on is children's mental health. And that I would say before about 4 or 5 years ago, was not on the radar screen at all for Washington state. And in fact, uh, was participating in a kind of a larger policy roundtable around mental health generally. And each time I would bring up children's issues, it was kind of like, yeah, yeah, well, in 2020, we're integrating mental health and physical health. And so we'll just deal with it then. And it was like, oh no, our kids can't can't cannot wait. So, uh, Representative Ruth Kagi in one of her pieces of legislation got a, a little component in there to to put together a workgroup to look at children's mental health issues. And I became chair of that workgroup, and we looked at children's mental health from the viewpoints of early learning K through 12 and in the healthcare system. So really looking at it, um, at mental health issues around where the kids are, not where our systems are. So I think so many times we think of mental health as a as a health care issue. But if our kids are in preschool or in regular school during the day and every day,

that's the place that we need to identify it and hopefully get them a little bit of help. And so over the past few years, we've passed a number of, um, I guess, landmark, but certainly systematic changing legislation that looks at children's mental health from the point of view of early learning, K-12 and health care, and making different changes within those three systems to get to kids, get them some mental health versus addressing mental illness, but get them mental health by building social, emotional, social emotional learning skills. Empathy. Self-regulation. Self-awareness. Teamwork. Collaboration. Um, so building that for every student and then recognizing the students that need a little bit more, um, care. So, for instance, when my, um, when my kids were little, about six years ago, my grandmother, my dad and my mom all passed away within a 13 month period. And it was, you know, really hard on me. But the impact that I saw in my kids was what was alarming. They were really concerned about who was going to die next. And, um, and they luckily had school counselors that they could talk to. And it was kind of about then that I began to realize that not every school has a school counselor. And so, you know, the fact that my kids could go, you know, that above the social emotional learning, they needed a little bit of help that they could reach out to somebody. Somebody could reach out to them and help them address that issue before they just internalized it and stuffed it down. Um, and that was really helpful. And so I really understand the importance of that kind of that middle ground. When you have a trauma, you want to be to address that right away. And then of course, um, you know, the more intense level, if you have a mental illness or a psychotic break or some other really acute issue, we need to address that as well, so that it doesn't rise to the level of having a long term, full term adult mental health issue or mental illness issue. So it's been um, it's been great to really start looking at those and trying to reduce the need for spending in mental health for adults by trying to focus on prevention and going more upstream.

Jeff Schwager: And so how specifically do you do that? Do you, uh, is it teacher training? Is it curriculum in the schools you mentioned? Not all schools have social workers. Do you mandate that all schools should have a social worker?

Tana Senn: So a lot of those things that you mentioned are very expensive. Yes. So we have done a number of different things. Um, we have tried to, um, done things that make billing codes, uh, relevant to children's mental health so that if you're going to your primary care physician, they can actually identify and get, um, get money from Medicaid to reimburse them for a mental health visit so that we can get pediatricians who will actually be interested in seeing Medicaid patients so poor, poor kids or lower income children so they can get the health care that they need, um, building a trauma informed care training module for early learning providers so that they understand, uh, aces adverse childhood experiences. And they can recognize in children not just when they're acting out, but that there might be something behind that. And so instead of kicking children out of preschool, which happens, uh, more than three times as often as getting kicked out of K through 12. If you can imagine getting these these child care providers a little bit more understanding and training so that they can try and address trauma instead of reacting to to trauma. Um, for the K through 12 level, we put together, um, a pilot, two pilots in education service districts, which are there's nine regions around the state that help school districts with their different education components. And what we found was that schools aren't billing, aren't using Medicaid to bill as much as they could around mental health issues. And so working to create the esds as the, um, as the billers, if you will, the Medicaid billers so that school districts don't have to deal with that kind of paperwork. And then the reimbursement goes to the schools, which again, helps our underfunded schools or, um, or gives them more, more flexibility to actually fund the school counselors and their other needs. So those are just three examples of across the board how we've done some things by a systematic change like in healthcare, like in a code sort of thing, and then in early learning a training and then in high school, kind of more billing and drawing down additional dollars. And I would say each bill we passed two bills now. Um, and there have been about 6 to 8 components in each bill, um, that have been trying to make the system work better for, for access to children's mental health. Um.

Jeff Schwager: Fantastic.

Tana Senn: Yeah. So that's been actually very exciting. And, um, my bipartisan my colleague, representative Tom dent, and I got a National American Academy of Pediatrics award for our bipartisan work on children's mental health this past year. Um, because again, I think it's a burgeoning issue. And in fact, there was a King County Mental Health legislative forum, and they have usually have speakers who are just who are recovering from mental health issues. And it's really a powerful evening. And this past year, all of the speakers talked about how their mental health issues started when they were kids and whether it was from abuse or a feeling of depression. Um, you know, sexual abuse, bullying, drug addiction, whatever the issue may have been. And, you know, I was kind of like, okay, not to say I told you so, but truly, let's if we do a good amount of work and start to really pay attention to children's mental health, we're going to reduce adult mental health issues because it's going to be prevention. We're going to give them the tools they need. We're going to address things early before they, um, they mushroom out. So it's pretty It's pretty exciting.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. That's great. So you've been in the legislature. How long now?

Tana Senn: This is my fifth year.

Jeff Schwager: Fifth year. And, um, what are your long term goals? Are we going to see mayor Sen. Governor Sen. Senator. Congresswoman?

Tana Senn: I don't know. I'm not closing anything off. Uh, I would certainly say, but I really am enjoying where I am now. I was a Mercer Island city councilwoman, and I really before I was a legislator, and I really enjoyed that. And it was kind of some of my urban policy roots. Uh, looking at infrastructure and making sure we had a sound budget and dealing with some of the those kind of components. But I recognize what I missed was working on things like education, uh, gun violence, some of those reproductive rights, some of those bigger issues that weren't as relevant or as influenced on the city level as they are, um, on the state level. And so I've really been enjoying that shift. Um, and I'm, I just I'm on the education committee. I'm on early learning and human services. So a lot of those Jewish values of public education, of human services, um, really, really, uh, I get to act on them. So I'm loving where I am now. One one, one quick story. Um, I am kind of babbling, but one quick story that happened just this session. So when I first moved to Seattle in 2000, um, I wanted to stay actively involved in, in advocacy again. I had just come from working for a national Hadassah, and I was moving here and trying to figure out what I was going to do next. My husband got a job at Amazon, and so I reached out and I found the Jewish Federation, and there they had a government affairs committee. So I joined it as a volunteer and my first time ever in Olympia, Washington state Capitol. I had my baby son Benjamin in my baby Bjorn with his little feet sticking out and, um, an older gentleman, another icon in, in, uh, Washington state Jewish community. It was Ted Daniels. And he to this day, you know, stop teasing me. I'd forgotten socks for for my son. And it was really cold, but I was a new mom, so, you know, it was it was par for the course. But one of the things we were down there advocating for was something called the general assistance. Uh, general assistance. What was the you unemployment general assistance unemployment program? And so that was to help people who had disabilities or long term illnesses and giving them a little bit of financial help. And so I was down there for advocating for that. Well, fast forward 15 years and just this past session, the Gao has now become abd um, which is uh, aged, blind and disabled program. And we needed to do a technical fix because some people were going homeless before they could qualify for federal benefits versus state benefits. And so we had a little bit of a tweak to do on that bill. And I got to speak, uh, on the bill's behalf on the House floor and in committee. And that week, my son Benjamin was paging in the state Capitol, in the Senate. And so it was just this full circle for me just to have the first time I'd ever gone to Olympia with was him as a baby, working on that policy issue. And fast forward 15 years, I'm still working on that issue. And there he is, back in Olympia as a page. And it was really, uh, it was really heartwarming, I have to say. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: That's great. Yeah. If you have pictures of those occasions, those would be great to include in the.

Tana Senn: I'll see if I do. I'll see if I do.

Jeff Schwager: That would be wonderful. Yeah. Um. I wonder if you have any thoughts, uh, having just passed equal pay, um, being a woman out in the world and in the workplace about the MeToo movement and everything that's going on right now, um, in that you have a son, you also.

Tana Senn: I have a son and a daughter, 15 year old.

Jeff Schwager: Daughter. So I'm sure that's, um, something that you've had to talk to her about. Um, yeah.

Tana Senn: Well, it's great to talk to both of them about, um, you know, really importantly, speaking to both boys and girls about the MeToo movement and sexual harassment. Um, it is definitely, you know, it's one of those undercurrents, um, when I talk about equal pay oftentimes. So the policy issue that we worked on around equal pay was trying to reduce pay secrecy. So I don't know if you just saw just yesterday, um, it came out that in the the amazing show The Crown, the Queen. Oh, yeah. You know, this is about the crown, about the royal family. The Queen is being paid less than the king in this TV show, right? Sorry. The prince. Right? Right. Exactly. Thank you. The Queen is being paid less than the prince. And the show is about the queen. About the crown. Her crown. And she is being paid less. And so, you know, didn't know about it until the, you know, pay disparities came out. So our bill was really around our law is really around pay secrecy. And so I often say, you know, with as we lift the shroud of silence around sexual harassment, so must we lift the secrecy around our wages. And so there's, you know, a really clear connection between the two as well. I think opponents of equal pay would argue, well, women just need to negotiate better and they would have better pay. And so were they supposed to negotiate better with their boss who was sexually harassing them, or who was sexually harassing other women, or who had been retaliated, who were retaliating against employees for speaking up? Like, come on, it's not, you know, put the blame on the victim. And I think there's a lot of that in the MeToo movement of, let's make sure we're not putting the blame on the victim. We're not putting blame on the person who's coming forward who might be tarnishing the reputation of somebody. Impressive. Um, it's about that person's actions, not about the woman reporting it. Yeah. Um, I think back to Anita Hill, and she must be just hitting her head. I mean, now, probably feeling, you know, very kind of, um, proud that she stood up. But, I mean, talk about taking the punches for women for decades before people would be willing to listen to what she had to say. Yeah. Um, so it is. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: And she's still ridiculed by some to this day. It's. And of course, we still have her harasser on the court.

Tana Senn: It's amazing. So my mom, um, interestingly, had both an equal pay and a sexual harassment, uh, issue or story, and she worked for a company that, um, she was kind of busty. My mom and her nickname in the company was lungs. And for the holidays, they would give her crotchless stockings, um, and and things like that. I mean, these were literally gifts that she got from her boss. Um, and she always told the story. And in fact, one time on the House floor, I, I had her Rolex watch on, and I just kind of raised my hand and I shook my arm to show the watch. She there was a there was a promotional opportunity for vice presidents in her company who could sell the most safaris. Stories. And so she worked her butt off, and she won that. She sold the most safaris of anybody around the country. And when it came time to get her prize, which was going to be a diamond, sapphire studded Rolex, the company said, oh, you know what? You're just a woman. You don't need that Rolex. We'll just give you the base model. And they gave her a plain Rolex, which was lovely, but not what anybody else, i.e. a man would have gotten. And so those, you know, and that was the intersection even for me, of that of the equal pay and the sexual harassment of it's not respecting women and not respecting their value and not respecting their contribution and not treating them equally. And so for me, that is very much what's at the core of my values.

Jeff Schwager: That's a powerful story.

Tana Senn: Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Yeah. Where did she work?

Tana Senn: Uh, Abercrombie and Kent. It was actually a British kind of firm. Um, and.

Jeff Schwager: We don't have to put.

Tana Senn: That. Yeah, I was going to say. I mean, you know, I leave that to you, but, uh, you know, she was in the travel business, having grown up in Kenya. That was, you know, she kind of had that expertise in that. She had a fabulous accent. So she was a very good fundraiser for many causes because no one could deny her and her beautiful accent. So.

Jeff Schwager: Um, you said your son is paging.

Tana Senn: He was paging. It was just a week program. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Um. Huh. Um, are you encouraging your kids to go into public service?

Tana Senn: You know, whatever they want to do is what I want them to do. Um, my daughter two years ago came down and testified on the equal pay bill. Um, she could not wait. She wrote out her remarks. She practiced them. She studied them. Um, you know, it was definitely not. I did not encourage her or suggest that she do that. In fact, I had to drive home at 10:00 one night, pick her up, drive back down to Olympia, stay over, get up at 7:00 to get to the committee with her to testify. And then she got a ride home with, um, a wonderful advocate who had been coming down from Seattle because I couldn't take her back home. So, I mean, it was it was not a she definitely had to want to do this. And she was just amazing. Um, and so she definitely has that fire in her belly. And I think my son wants to go into political science. So, um, and sometimes around the house, he calls me Representative Saine instead of mom. It's kind of funny, but, um. Yeah. So if they want to do that, I would be, you know, I would be thrilled. Um, yeah. And I would be loathe if I didn't mention that my cousin is Deborah Sun, who was the insurance commissioner for the state of Washington. And in fact, in 2000, when I moved out to work on her Senate campaign and my husband got a job at Amazon. So we both came out for that. Um, and so at some point, I was like, well, that's pretty cool. We could have a Sun dynasty. And, um, I was half joking, but then I, you know, it was, you know, more than 12 years later that I got involved in politics. So, um, she's a good influence as well.

Jeff Schwager: Was that the. Was that the first? Was that why you moved to Seattle?

Tana Senn: That was. Yeah. I was just going to come out as a sabbatical from New York. I figured I'd just move out here for a little bit. Work on her campaign. When she won, I could work in DC. Um, and my husband was working at Colgate-Palmolive in New York, and, you know, there was this whole thing called the.com boom. And so he.

Jeff Schwager: He's heard.

Tana Senn: About that. Yeah. Yeah, there's this thing. So he's like, let me see if I can get a job. And I'll never forget. He started looking May 1st. And by June 1st we were living out here. He'd gotten a job with Amazon and they moved us out. So we just jumped in with both feet.

Jeff Schwager: That's great.

Tana Senn: Yeah. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Is there anything I haven't asked you that you'd like to talk about?

Tana Senn: Um. Let's see. My husband's Kevin, and he's fabulous. Um. Interfaith marriage. And he's very committed to the to our kids Judaism. Um, my daughter's bat mitzvah is coming up in June, and my son had his a few years ago. Thank you. It's very exciting. Um, let's see what else. Um. I think we covered a lot of it. Um. Yeah.

Jeff Schwager: Good. Yeah. Okay. That was great. Let's see. I think we probably.