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CTRL+CLICK CAST #26 Technology for Social Good with Aisha Satterwhite

[Music]

Lea Alcantara: You are listening to CTRL+CLICK CAST. We inspect the web for you! Today we're talking with Aisha Satterwhite about technology for social good. I'm your host, Lea Alcantara, and I'm joined by my fab co-host:

Emily Lewis: Emily Lewis!

Lea Alcantara: This episode is sponsored by [Visual Chefs](http://visualchefs.com), web development focusing on content management system integration and custom web application development. Visit visualchefs.com to find out more.

Emily Lewis: CTRL+CLICK would also like to thank [Pixel & Tonic](http://pixelandtonic.com) for being our major sponsor.

[Music ends] Hi Lea, how was your weekend out of town?

Lea Alcantara: So fun!

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: It was just a short trip to Portland, like kind of a whirlwind trip.

Emily Lewis: Road trip or train?

Lea Alcantara: Well, it was a train trip there and bus ride back just because I wanted to have to experience which one is better, which one is faster.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs] I'm going to guess the train was better.

Lea Alcantara: The train was better.



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Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Because oh my god.

Emily Lewis: I've been on a long bus trip before. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: The bus, oh, it was too long and especially because the traffic was unpredictable, and duh, it's Sunday. Everyone goes home on Sunday.

Emily Lewis: Oh yeah.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I was so annoyed, but Portland itself lives up to its foodie reputation, so yummy. That's basically all I did, it's just stuff my face.

Emily Lewis: A little Portland food tour.

Lea Alcantara: Yes, yes. There was one place that I definitely recommend. It's Lardo, which...
[Laughs]

Emily Lewis: The name won me over immediately. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: I know. I know, and I ordered this amazing pork belly sandwich topped with an egg. Anytime I go to a sandwich shop, the moment I see it's topped with an egg, I get it. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: So yeah, that was a fun trip.

Emily Lewis: Nice, I've never been to Portland, but I'm curious, is the weather as good as Seattle's in the summer, or is it a little more overcast?

Lea Alcantara: No, I feel like the weather is really similar. This particular weekend it was super hot.



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Emily Lewis: Oh yeah, you guys have been stuck in like a heat wave for a couple of days, like a week or something.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, yeah. I think it was like in the mid-80s.

Emily Lewis: That's nothing. You have no idea. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Well, no.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: No, that's my tolerance level. Anything higher than mid-80s I'm just no. I'm just no. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Well, then I have to make sure when you come visit me here in Albuquerque, that we do it not in the summertime. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yes, yes. That would be fun.

Emily Lewis: Well, good, and you're getting ready for a big trip this week?

Lea Alcantara: Yes. I'm heading back home in Canada to see a friend get married.

Emily Lewis: Oh, nice.

Lea Alcantara: So yeah, that will be fun.

Emily Lewis: Good. I'm jealous. I think I told you I took some time off?

Lea Alcantara: Yes.

Emily Lewis: But I haven't gone anywhere. I haven't ... It's just been like resetting myself, so I need to make some plans to get *out* of town.



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Lea Alcantara: Staycations are good too, though.

Emily Lewis: Well...

Lea Alcantara: Sometimes you just want to like mellow and not do a thing.

Emily Lewis: Yeah. Well, that was necessary after the launch.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: I needed it totally, my mind not having to think about anything except nothing.

[Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: What was the next documentary I'm going to watch?

Lea Alcantara: Nice.

Emily Lewis: But anyways, I actually watched a documentary this weekend about Aaron Swartz who unfortunately committed suicide last year. He was an advocate for the Open Web and was one of the people who was really instrumental in blocking SOPA.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Emily Lewis: And I thought it was really interesting because that's really good timing for today's episode to talk about using technology for social good.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Emily Lewis: So let's go ahead and get to it. We've got special guest, Aisha Satterwhite, with us today to talk, like I said, about technology for social good. Aisha is a digital strategist who is currently the Vice President of Project Management of Blue State Digital, which may be best known as the



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agency behind Obama's 2008 campaign website. Whether as a strategist, project manager or team leader, Aisha's entire career has involved advocacy and community engagement. Welcome to the show, Aisha!

Aisha Satterwhite: Hey ladies. Thanks for having me today!

Lea Alcantara: So Aisha, can you tell our listeners a bit more about yourself?

Aisha Satterwhite: Sure. I've been working with Blue State for probably the last year or so, and I've been working on using tech for social good, and especially website development and online/offline advocacy campaigns for the past 10 years. So I've been doing this work for a long, long time.

Emily Lewis: Am I correct if I remember when we met at EECl a couple of years back, you're from the DC area, right?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yes, born and raised in DC.

Emily Lewis: That's where I moved from to move to New Mexico. [Laughs] I had to get out of all of the politics and all that other stuff, but I would imagine that if you're really engaged in community advocacy, that's a great city to work in.

Aisha Satterwhite: Yes. There are lots of really great organizations, lots of people doing really great, great work, trying to figure out how to work within and outside of the political framework that basically governs how everybody lives and breathes in this city.

Emily Lewis: So when I met you, as I mentioned at EECl a few years back, I recalled that you were running your own business. Now, you're working for Blue State Digital. Why the change?

Aisha Satterwhite: Well, actually, I've always been pretty intrigued by what Blue State does. I was familiar with their work on the 2008 Obama campaign. I knew they were doing all the work for the



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2012 campaign, and one of their main clients I had when we met at EECl was the Human Rights Campaign. And we were building out a huge website, a new website for them, and Blue State was the vendor, and I was the consultant helping to lead that project internally. So I was exposed to the inner workings of the agency for about 2-1/2 years, and decided that when they asked me to come on board and help them think through project management and process and strategy, that it would be a great opportunity for me to scale what I was doing as kind of a small one-woman plus subcontractors type of shop.

Lea Alcantara: Okay, so would you say it's accurate that part of your move was so you can do more working for a larger organization? Do you have more access to resources this way?

Aisha Satterwhite: Absolutely. When you run your own business and it's small, you can really only focus on one big client and maybe a tiny handful of smaller clients at a time. So making this shift for me meant that I would be able to touch more organizations at the same time in varying levels and at various scales. And then I actually have access to tons of talented resources internally who could help me with the work at a much faster pace than I could do if I was just doing it the way I was before. So it was an exciting shift for me.

Emily Lewis: So you mentioned you've been doing advocacy work of some kind for the majority of your career. I'm curious, what are the social causes that mean the most to you?

Aisha Satterwhite: Well, I spent the last 2-1/2 years working with the Human Rights Campaign working on LGBT advocacy and equality issues, both at the federal level and the state and local level, so that was something really, really close to me that I felt really concerned about for a while. But my background really in using technology for social good really started around US foreign policy on Africa and figuring out how to engage young people who didn't have physical proximity, but were using things like chat rooms and discussion boards and listservs and email lists back in the day when those



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were the primary tools that we had at our disposal in the tech world to advocate around how to share more education and information and resources around AIDS prevention and education in the US and in Africa.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Aisha Satterwhite: So from that route, I shifted into doing work and bring technology into low-income public housing in the US and tackle those same kinds of issues like health as a human right and access to better housing and good jobs and things like that. And then I shifted into doing that kind of work for unions and membership advocacy organizations around healthcare and education. So I've been really committed to that kind of a wide range of social good and advocacy issues and using tech to thread the needle between all those things.

Emily Lewis: So how did that all start for you? Was it in college? In high school? When did you feel a desire to explore ways to help organizations that ultimately help individuals and communities?

Aisha Satterwhite: It started on my first job after school. I went to a small liberal arts school in Massachusetts and then I moved to New York, and the first job I had was working for a really tiny nonprofit organization that focused on US foreign policy on Africa, and they had been really actively involved in the divestment movement for South Africa during the anti-apartheid days. So that was my first kind of deep dive into the power of advocacy work. And when I started working there, there were only two people in the organization who had email addresses. We still had dial-up and I was one of those people who had an email address, and that was like the beginning of me keeping open the door to exploring what you could do when you had so much physical distance between you and the people you are trying to serve.



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Lea Alcantara: So let's talk about how technology has changed, because you've been working with technology for such a long time for advocacy work. How do you think it's changed over the years to advocate for social cause, both positively and negatively?

Aisha Satterwhite: Well, in the beginning, of my career, like I mentioned before, we had email addresses, listservs, discussion boards, chat rooms, those kinds of things. Websites weren't a thing. Mobile wasn't a thing that we were working on. Having a bunch of people on the same email list and sharing ideas across continents was a big deal back then. So I remember very clearly when we started shifting into using email campaigns and fax campaigns to reach out to state and local elected officials, that was the way we got in front of people. And you'd take all the emails that you got or you take all the signatures that you were able to collect online and you would actually print them out and put them in massive amounts of boxes and dump them in front of the Capitol or like fill up the mailboxes of elected officials inside the Senate or the House.

Emily Lewis: Wow.

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Aisha Satterwhite: And that was how we were beginning to use technology to push the envelope. When I started shifting into more national organizing work, we started using things like robust online advocacy tools that were proprietary and licensed to make the process more automated. So instead of faxing 200 people over the course of the day and just standing in front of a fax machine to do it, we would use what was then new technology to roll that stuff out in a more automated manner.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]



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Aisha Satterwhite: And I think we used email messaging campaigns a lot for a very, very, very long time, and the biggest shift that I see now is that we've gone away from using email campaigns as much and relying on...

Emily Lewis: Oh!

Aisha Satterwhite: People still use micro-sites to run campaigns, but not as much as we did in the last probably five to seven years. But we're now relying on social media and the mobile technology to move those things in a much faster clip. So the pressure is higher because you have to get things out way, way, way faster than you did before. But the impact is also much, much more easily achieved. You can see the measure of your results much faster than you could by just waiting to see what someone would do if you gave them 100 boxes of faxes that people sent.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, that's actually what the question was that popped to my head as you were talking about that... So in earlier days, how did you measure all of that work that you were putting in?

Aisha Satterwhite: Well, it was a combination of being able to say we have this many people sign this many documents and putting that physical paper in front of people. But the other thing that we had to work extra diligently on was actually impacting legislative change. And I feel like when I was at the beginning of my career and people still had protests and we used picket signs and we would do sit-ins ... It was a much more visible physical presence in trying to advocate for change and putting more pressure on elected officials and kind of using your ability to impact how people were reelected or not reelected.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Aisha Satterwhite: Now, I know that people talk about social media activism in the same way that we talked about it when petitions were a hot new thing. Like you can sign your petition, say you did



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something, never leave your chair and keep going. So that's one of the biggest challenges I see today, how do you measure social impact? Do you measure it by a number of tweets or number of likes or shares, or is there something else? I think people are still trying to figure out what the balance of that looks like.

Emily Lewis: Another question occurred to me when you were describing that is when earlier when people were doing sit-ins or carrying picket signs, it may have felt like... I don't know, but I'm guessing because I never had a role like that myself; I've never protested anything or anything like that. But the people who did, they seemed very emotionally and personally invested. Does that personal investment seem to be less so when the work is being done via social media? Via the anonymity of the Internet where you're not actually physically connecting with other people?

Aisha Satterwhite: No, I don't think it's less so, but it can be harder for people like me who've been doing it for a long time and are used to a very different kind of interaction between the work and the tools that you use to do the work. Because in the beginning, I worked with a lot of people who were very committed to making sure that you have your online actions and you have all of the actions that you do in real life in real time in real places with real people that helped kind of either prop up the online work or provided a serious level of on-the-ground support for that work.

I've noticed generationally that people are much more comfortable with texts and tweets and posts and all these things where you don't have to know who you're doing it for, don't have to have an immediate personal connection to what you're doing it for. But that doesn't mean that the issue doesn't impact you just as strongly. I think the thing that people really need to be mindful of is that just because you can make an impact by sending something out or sharing something in real time, and in a way that sometimes it's faster than broadcast news every puts information out these days, it



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doesn't mean that you don't still need to go out with those picket signs and protests and meet people out on the ground and in communities and still do that the other work that requires face time.

Lea Alcantara: Well, I'm curious because one of the things that I've been thinking about is when you do things on the ground in person, there's a lot more peril depending on what you are protesting about, right?

Emily Lewis: [Agree]

Lea Alcantara: So do you feel that technology adds a level of safety to advocate for controversial issues or do you think that no matter what, if an issue is dangerous, it's dangerous no matter whether you do it online or in person?

Aisha Satterwhite: I think initially there's a perception that it's safer because there's anonymity and distance.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Aisha Satterwhite: But it depends on who you are.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.

Aisha Satterwhite: And who can kind of rally around you in a negative way.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: There are tons of online harassment, especially of women and women of color who advocate around those kinds of issues.

Emily Lewis: Right.



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Aisha Satterwhite: Because you're not doing it in a public physical space, that you don't feel like the intensity of someone coming for you in a dangerous way. But the vitriol is still alive and kicking online.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: And the Internet and all the tools that we're using today to do this work are extremely powerful and impactful and have been used to do some really intensely amazing things. But there is still danger, and there is still the ability for people to track you down and find you in real life. Online harassment and death threats and rape threats and things like that are still pretty prevalent, so I'd say it's still a pretty good mix or a pretty bad mix honestly. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Yeah. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Well, in regards to that, these threats always occur even before social media blew up, correct?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yes.

Lea Alcantara: Do you feel like it's just now amplified, like that people understand now that this harassment occurs?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah. I mean, there are people who have not traditionally had access to media outlets can now use these social platforms to amplify their voices and call out the things that have been happening in real time in real life that people haven't been exposed to, which is still another platform that's more accessible to people who don't have or who haven't in the past had the means to kind of elevate or escalate around their issues or their causes or the things that they are fighting against. So the use of social media has become an equalizer in displaying all of the things that people are doing for social good and all the things that are still barriers to us moving in a different direction.



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Emily Lewis: Yeah. I guess I feel like I'm often talking about the things about social media that I *don't* like, but I think it's just really well said that it's the equalizer. It gives everyone, including the assholes... [Laughs]

Aisha Satterwhite: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: It gives everyone a place to have their voice heard, to get involved with a cause that they believe in.

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: Which is a good thing, but all good things I guess come with negativity sometimes. So aside from social media, what other types of technology are you working with in your campaigns and the projects that you work for?

Aisha Satterwhite: Well, people still like to say that email is dead. They've been saying that for the past – I don't know – five or six years. It's not dead.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah. [Laughs]

Aisha Satterwhite: It's still the primary method of commerce and business and communication. And now we have all of these social media tools that people like to use, but the thing that connects all of them is usually an email address, and that's how you get to put it in place, that's how you get to use it, that's how you get notifications for what you're sharing or what other people are sharing, or trying to get people to advocate around. So I don't want to downplay the continuing importance of email as an advocacy tool.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]



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Aisha Satterwhite: We're using that pretty significantly, but we're also doing really interesting work with online fundraising campaigns and using our best practices and knowledge of the things that we have done over the past four or five years, not just from the Obama campaign work that we've done, but from other international presidential elections and campaign work we've been able to wrap our hands around and use that and translate those learnings into ways to help organizations that obviously are not scaled as big as campaigns like that or don't have the kinds of budgets that support campaigns like that to move that work.

We're also really good at social media engagement, so you meet people where they are and figure out how to create channels where you're using email or you're using on-the-ground actions. You're using fundraising or email signup or advocacy campaigns. You're using social media. You're using video and paid media efforts and SEO and SEM to kind of round out all of those approaches together.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Aisha Satterwhite: And of course, websites as well is another vehicle for that work. So you're looking at all those things in their entirety and not just in bits and pieces to move messages in tiny buckets, but taking all of them and wrapping them up together into comprehensive campaign strategies.

Emily Lewis: That makes me question how do you do that? Like there are so many different channels... [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Exactly. [Laughs]

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Emily Lewis: You can speak to what you're doing now or what you've done in the past, but is there one person responsible for this particular channel, or is there someone who kind of oversees all of them? Like how does that go?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah. It can be hard especially when you have clients and partners who want all of it. Who want the sun, the moon and the stars, everything.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: As soon as a new social media tool comes out, they want to get on it and have it on their website and start pushing advocacy campaigns out or messaging out through those things. And that part can be a little challenging because there are new tools released every day.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: And you have to be able to take a step back and say, "Let me do an assessment of where you are now and where your biggest audiences are and who you're trying to reach on a regular basis. And *then* put together a list of targets for where you should be putting your information out, or where you should be focusing your resources in that work."

So it does it make sense to be ten social media channels if your target audiences are on only one or two of them? So we like to take a step back and get a full understanding of what the larger goals are when we're working with clients so we can tailor-make an approach that works for them, and then spend the time and the energy investing into reaching out to those specific targets. In terms of how we have those roles divided, we have teams of experts basically under all of those umbrellas here who specialize in those pieces. And then we have people at a senior leadership level who have experience and comfort and familiarity with all of those things, who take a lead role in overseeing on how those pieces of work are actually done.



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Lea Alcantara: So I'm curious even with all those moving pieces, even if someone says, "Okay, we're going to do email campaigns or we're going to do a Twitter campaign or whatever," do you have any hard-and-fast best practice rules as in like, "We're not going to send a thousand emails at once at this time," or just general rules that you guys try to follow so you're avoiding the spamming part of advocacy?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah. I mean, there's an art and a science to targeting people and sending messages out.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Aisha Satterwhite: So we do a lot of targeted emails and list segmentation so you're not burning through your list and you're not asking for people to do too many things in too short a window. We've all experienced that with big campaigns and small campaigns, and things we've signed up for and things we've mysteriously appeared on lists for. I think we all have experience with that, right?

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Emily Lewis: [Agrees] [Laughs]

Aisha Satterwhite: So you have to be really careful and diligent about using analytics and data to figure out the best way to reach out to people and who to reach out to.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: And you use daisy chains. If a person has done this, then we should take them through this series of steps. And just constantly looking at those things and figuring out where to experiment and where to make tweaks along the way and looking at the results of those kinds of campaigns. If you've gotten the big hit on social media shares for a very specific type of graphic or action or something like that, then it make sense to continue to test out new approaches for that, and



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if you've tried something that you and the stakeholders were super, super invested in seeing win and it actually failed miserably, then you take a step back and you say, "Well, we all wanted to do that, but it didn't quite work out the way we wanted, so let's try a different approach."

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Aisha Satterwhite: And it's really about experimentation and a healthy dose of analytics and testing.

Emily Lewis: It sounds to me like the basic tenets of digital marketing.

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah.

Emily Lewis: That it's just being applied for advocacy and social causes as opposed to maybe selling a product or a service.

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah, I mean, there are lots of parallels in that space that I think people aren't necessarily drawn to initially just because it feels like it's different. People don't feel comfortable saying that, "We're selling to people and we're using these things to sell to people," and then taking those same principles and applying them to social advocacy or social justice or tech for good work. But if it works for products and your message is your product, then you need to apply the same principles if you want to be successful, because people will respond in the same way to short bursts of messaging or the advertising saying that it takes six impressions before a person actually remembers the name of your product and then it takes even more for them to connect the product to the thing that you're actually selling and not just its name.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: So there are lots of business-minded principles you can take and apply very successfully to move social justice word for word. It's the smarter and faster way of doing it now.



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Emily Lewis: So I'm curious: where do you think technology can affect the best or the most change? For example, you've talked about some work with spreading information about health as a human right or housing ... Like where are the areas that you think technology can have some of the best impact?

Aisha Satterwhite: Well, from what I've seen on social media campaigns over the past year, and I'll preface this statement by saying that I don't spend a ton of time on social media. I'm one of those people who can only do one tool at a time, so I started off reluctantly with Facebook and then moved to Pinterest and then moved to Twitter, but I only do one at a time. I can't like multitask on that because my brain is not conditioned in that way to manage all of those things. So they take a lot of work to keep updated and to figure out what your tone in your voice should be, and like I think about it from an audience engagement perspective so that's probably why I don't spend a lot of time on multiple tools at once.

But from my brief time that I have spent on Twitter, I've seen a ton of online advocacy around environmental justice issues and around mental health issues and around racial justice and police brutality issues and definitely around fighting online harassment issues. So I've seen people sit back and say that there is not that much you can do using social media as a tool, but look at what happened with Arab Spring and look at what happened with the Bring Back Our Girls Campaign for the young women who were being kidnapped in Nigeria. Like those are pretty intense global issues that a lot of people wouldn't have any contact with if they weren't on a platform that was able to span multiple countries and cities and provinces and millions of people across the world.

So the thing that I find really fascinating about how social media is being used right now is that even though it kind of leaves the door open for people to do really horrible things and say horrible things because they can be anonymous, the door is open even wider for people who are interested in



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seeing their world beyond their doorstep or their porch or their block. So you can get pulled in really easily into things that you'd never be exposed to otherwise, and that part is really exciting to me, and I feel like we can take the issues that we are advocating around every day and just blow them up on those channels because the reach can be so great.

Emily Lewis: Well, that kind of leads me to a question: Let's say I as an individual – not representing my company, not representing a client, just me myself, and I – care about something particular online, but my online presence is exclusively professional. It's not me personally, but I care about something personally. What's the good way of going about getting involved in something personally on, let's say, social media, but maintaining your professional reputation? I mean ... do you understand what I'm asking?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah, and it's actually a really good question and a hard one to answer because it's something that I wrestle with, and I know a lot of my peers wrestle with too, because it can keep you from getting a job if you don't do it right.

Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Aisha Satterwhite: Because that's where people go now if you're looking for a job or a client or whatever, people will hit Google and type in your name and check out what you're doing on social media to see if you're making good impression for yourself and would be a great representative of them. So I have one account that I kind of danced back and forth between being super professional and being silly and being very honest about how I feel about certain political issues. Because I only have one account, I'm mostly pretty measured about what I put out there. And there are times where I've been interested in creating a completely different persona because a lot of people online don't use their real names or anything like that. It's an anonymous platform, and sometimes I really would like to have that so I can just let it all out.



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Lea Alcantara: [Agrees]

Aisha Satterwhite: But I also feel like there's a time and a place for letting it all out and because I'm the type of person I am and the type of work I do and the type of advocacy issues I'm engaged in, I see much more value in me being able to say, "This is Aisha Satterwhite, and this is her handle, and this is what she believes in." And if you don't like any of the things that pop up there, you can unfollow or unfriend, because I can't be all things to all people, and I don't feel like I should have to hide behind some other kind of identity to be able to express those things. Other people I know have multiple accounts and they use them for very different reasons, but that's just seems like it would take forever.

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Lea Alcantara: Yeah, I feel like I do something very similar with my own because before I joined Emily, I was just @lealea and that was my business and personal. And so I want to be true to myself [laughs], but at the same time I understand that there are some views that I personally have that would alienate some of my followers or friends and things like that. So for me personally, I segment it in a way that Twitter is my sort of public friendly, not really that controversial, though I'm not trying to be censoring myself in any real way. But my Facebook account is my more personal one, and I've got a segmented group of friends where I post things more freely, let's say. Maybe I don't do necessarily like giant rants or anything like that, but if somebody posted a link to an article that could be controversial, I would share it amongst my friends on Facebook. But it's difficult, I definitely think it's difficult to balance the personal and the professional while still being honest about it all because I don't feel like I'm being dishonest by segmenting. It's kind of like code-switching, you know?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah.



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Lea Alcantara: For example, I'm not going to swear in front of my Grandma, but that doesn't mean I'm not being myself around my Grandma.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Lea Alcantara: But that particular audience would not appreciate that when I can do that in a bar with my friends, you know?

Aisha Satterwhite: Exactly, yeah.

Emily Lewis: I think it's also hard from – not the side of the person putting out information or sharing content – but consuming it. Like I'm hardly ever on Twitter so I'm clueless as to what people are saying on there – happily clueless of what people are saying on there. But I do visit Facebook more frequently because that's where I have friends from high school and college and things like that. But when I see someone post something that I find it so disturbing, I'm like, "Oh my god, I can't believe they think that, but I like this person so much." And you're like, "Do I just block them? Do I unfriend them? Do I just ignore it ... to each his own and let it be?" It's difficult on the consuming end as well.

Aisha Satterwhite: It is.

Emily Lewis: It is sort of as a more philosophical social question than anything about technology, but with sort of that scenario in mind, like how would you recommend engaging with someone online whose views are in direct conflict to your own social ideas, and perhaps someone who you have a relationship with of some kind, whether it's in a professional, acquaintance or an old friend?

Aisha Satterwhite: That's a tough question. I think that even though we have free choice on who we follow and who we like on sites, I know Facebook is intensely more personal because for the most part it's real people and real lives with day-to-day sharing of very personal things. And Twitter is kind of a vast morass of everything you can think of, and I think that people believe that they're being



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diverse in some instances in terms of who they follow and who follows them. But I find that like the people that I follow and the people who follow me, there aren't that many degrees of separation between us based on whatever algorithms are in place to kind of generate those recommendations or based on how you're able to find likeminded people or people who share similar interests.

So I haven't had engaged in any Twitter fights. I haven't engaged with people who have expressed contradictory opinions or beliefs than the ones that I have, but that might be because I don't spend that much time on there. I spend some time, but not as much as people who have very big followings and big audiences, but this is where I like to take it back to the old school. I'd like to have those conversations with people in person. And not necessarily from the perspective of like debating, but you need to be able to read people's body language and how they're feeling and what the look on their face is and what their eyes look like, like that's where you can really gauge what they're saying based on like how you're reading them when they're saying it to you in person.

There are lots and lots and lots of things that people will say to shut you down in political and personal arguments online that they wouldn't dare say to your face because you know that you shouldn't talk to people like that, whether they have different beliefs in your or not. And that part is missing in social media, and that's the part where I try to encourage people, like if you feel like you're about to type something that you wouldn't want read back to you, or you wouldn't want someone like your parents or your grandparents to ever see and read back to you, then maybe you shouldn't write it down. And if you have enough emotion behind that thing that you're trying to say, then maybe you should figure out a better way to say it so someone can actually hear you.

Because a lot of times with social media, if you're aggressive about things and those arguments come up really, really strongly and at times maybe offensively, you need to work on your delivery and figure out how you can express your point without yelling. Because the minute you start yelling, no



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matter how valid or legit your point is, people close their ears and stop listening. And when that happens online, you don't really have another opportunity to reach those same people again because they're going to block you or shut you out or try to get other people to shut you down, but that kind of engagement is very, very different when it's face-to-face.

Lea Alcantara: So for me it feels like this leads to the question, is this more about preaching to the choir then? Or are there actual aspects where advocacy is really actually educating for change? Because I feel like sometimes there's a lot of, "Rah-rah! I believe in this. Well, I believe in this other thing." Well, that's great, and then nothing changes, you know? [Laughs] Or maybe that's just my perception of things? I think the question for me is, how or should that even be a goal to change an opinion? Or is it just a plant the seed of another idea?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah, I think it's probably the latter.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: It's planting the seed of another idea. I mean, this is something I think about a lot personally, especially since the type of work I've been doing has been the same, but the tools that I use to do that work has changed quite dramatically over the past 10 to 15 years.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: So I don't know. I do wonder. I even wondered when I did a lot of peaceful protests, and I've done them globally. It's really cool to be able to do that in another country. You feel like you're in that physical space with all these people around you who believe the same thing or believe they stand in the same place on that particular issue at that particular time.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah.



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Aisha Satterwhite: They might not be in there entirely on the same page that you are and everything else, but you have that kind of shared advocacy moment. How do you measure that? How do you measure if you're changing someone's opinion? How do you measure putting an idea in someone's head that can be taken to another place to impact change later? I don't know. I feel like I have a stronger grasp on that before when there is more face-to-face communication, more workshops, more town halls, more telephone calls.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: People don't talk on the phone anymore.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Aisha Satterwhite: It's those kinds of things where people's attention spans are much shorter now so you don't have that much time to get your point across and you have to be very strategic about it, and if the person doesn't perceive it the right way then it gets shut down. I think it's fair to say that you want every interaction with another person that you don't know to leave a good taste in their mouth afterwards.

Lea Alcantara: Right.

Emily Lewis: I wonder, do you get discouraged at times, or maybe if you don't want to speak about it personally, do you see clients struggling to deal with sort of that lack of sense of whether they are actually changing minds?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah, personally, yes I do get discouraged because there are some issues that seemed be persistent and pervasive or that never go away like police brutality. And that's something that's very present and very particular in people's lives in this country every day, and we live with that and we don't get a lot of attention shed on that issue publicly unless there's horrible tragedy. It's hard



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when those tragedies actually make it into the media with frequency because you're dealing with all those emotions at the same time just one after the other ... You think, "Well, how much Twitter outreach can there be? How many press conferences can there be before there's actually something that's galvanized around changing the action that's killing people or the laws that treat people a certain way without any kind of repercussion."

It's not just on the issues that I care about. I've seen that happening on lots of people's issues all the time. From a client perspective, because I've worked inside of nonprofits and unions and advocacy organizations for so long, I can see that from the other side. Like there's so many competing priorities inside organizations and there are so many people running the organizations who don't necessarily know what it takes to implement social media programs or digital strategy programs or online email or fundraising programs because they're not doing that work every day, that they can set goals and benchmarks that are much harder to achieve and that they can be influenced by the lure of social media and saying, "We need a million Twitter followers or we need this many likes for this action." And starts to rely on those kinds metrics instead of things that are more tangible in terms of how people's daily lives are impacted.

Lea Alcantara: Do you think that due to technology, that impatience that people have, they lose sight over the fact that several decades of advocacy is what led to current change. For example, when you mentioned the LG... what is the acronym, LGBT?

Aisha Satterwhite: LGBT.

Lea Alcantara: Yeah, that's been advocating for a long time, but it's finally showing some change in legislation.

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah.



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Lea Alcantara: So is the perspective that we have to understand that we can't change people's minds even in one year?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah.

Lea Alcantara: That you have to keep going on because this is generational change we're dealing with really in some cases, in some social cases?

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah, I absolutely agree with that. Healthcare reform didn't happen overnight. People were working on that for 25 years, and now we have our own version of universal healthcare in this country. That did not creep up and materialized because Obama is in the White House. There were lots and lots of pieces of legislation and lots of on-the-ground advocacy components being moved for years and years and years and years before it finally got to a place where it could be turned into something. And people are still not a 100% happy with it. But give it 10 or 20 years and let's take a step back and look at it then and evaluate whether or not it was a good move. So there are lots of legislative victories like that.

Last summer was a fantastic summer for marriage equality for LGBT rights across the country. That didn't manifest in a year's time. That took over 20 years, and people are still working really hard on the ground to make that happen. So it's not just state-by-state, but it moves to a place where it's federal where the components of that equality work become federal and not just at the whim of one state. And if you move to another state, your rights might not be the same there.

So the advent of social media and "I can get this in real time in 30 seconds" just adds to the impatience and the challenge of being able to say, "Just because we can put the information out there in 30 seconds doesn't mean it's going to change the way things are done in 30 seconds."



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Emily Lewis: Right. So in terms of companies or organizations that are public with where they put money for charitable contributions and maybe even use it to increase their audiences, using it as a way to reach people who think similarly like them. And then we have companies who keep their charitable contributions completely private so that you as the consumer may or may not know where their loyalties lie. Is there a right or wrong way of going about it? Is it best to be public and open? Is it better for a company to be private?

Aisha Satterwhite: I don't know that any company or organization would ever put all of their information out into the public domain, but the first thing you can do is go online and look for the Form 990, which is their version of a tax form, and you can see where they're spending their money. You can see what organizations and corporations are paying their board members and paying their highest-ranking staff. You can see how they're splitting their money in various ways.

At some places, it's much easier to get that information online and pretty quickly like you can go to Charity Navigator or those kinds of sites and look at tax forms that are a couple of years old. You're not going to get the one that was filed most recently, but you'll get one that's at least two or three years old so that it will give you a pretty good working knowledge of how people are walking and talking with their dollars.

Emily Lewis: And for those companies who do try to be very public about what organizations they support or charitable contributions that they make as a way to further their business endeavor, is that an effective strategy?

Aisha Satterwhite: I'm not sure. I mean, it depends on what your business and your strategy are. If you are in an organization that focuses on advocacy and social good and you want to find more like-minded individuals who can help you with your fundraising campaigns and who are willing to become donors and members of your organization, then it absolutely makes sense for you to make that more



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transparent online. So people can see that you're open about it and that you are to be trusted and that they can be confident about where their investment in your organization will go, and that's where I think some of organizations have trouble because they can't figure out how to take that information and turn it into a really effective messaging by saying, "If you give my organization \$50, it will help keep the lights on for this family in this town for this amount of time." Or figuring out how to come up with more tangible measurements of how individual donors can help make things different for people who need that help.

Lea Alcantara: It's interesting because in Alberta, there's this conference called Alberta Women Entrepreneurs Conference, and one of their guest speakers was Brett Wilson of *Dragons' Den* in Canada – if you guys watch *Dragons' Den* in Canada – and he had a talk about using corporate social responsibility not as an obligation, but as an opportunity to create major social and economic benefits. He was very unapologetic about the fact that his social causes do increase the profile of his professional work, but he also emphasized the fact that when his business is thriving, the more his business can contribute to these causes in the first place, so it's kind of a positive cycle for him.

But it's difficult because it's easy to say, "Yeah, that's great" *if* you agree with the social causes that this person is going forward with. No one will say "no, don't support kids' cancer care." Like no matter what political spectrum you're in, like everyone is together in saving children from cancer obviously. But it becomes morally questionable or murky when it's not a universal cause, let's say.

Aisha Satterwhite: Yeah. I mean, even with the marriage equality fights across the country over the last couple of years, there have been lots of corporate entities supporting those efforts in different states. There have been people signing on to supporting different advocacy organizations and saying like, "We have your back where you can count us in. You can put us on your list. You can use our likeness." I mean, Human Rights Campaign was really, really successful in getting people who



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participated in their corporate equality index which measures which corporations are doing the best in terms of equal benefits for LGBT employees and their family members. So there are ways for you to use that strategically to help push your message.

I mean, when I was doing work on African foreign policy, there was a lot of that kind of work being done to bridge the gap between corporate sponsors and legislators and faith-based leaders and youth leaders to say, “Even we’re all working in different disciplines and our goals might seemed different from the outset, we do have some shared commonalities here. The only way that we can push for social change on some of these issues is to stand together.” Are all corporations going to do that? No, not necessarily.

Emily Lewis: Right.

Aisha Satterwhite: But if you have the right mix of folks inside organizations and folks partnering with outside supporters, then you can figure out how to make that work. It’s a tough road to do it, though. But if you’ve been able to make it work in one advocacy stream, you can figure out how to replicate it and use it for another issue.

Emily Lewis: Well, before we wrap up today’s episode, I wanted to ask your opinion on what you think we in the web industry can do to help create positive social change using our web-specific skills and technology.

Aisha Satterwhite: That’s a really good question. So there are lots of opportunities to use hackathons and Code for Change and Code for America, those types of things, Black Girls Code ... to use those kinds of opportunities to bring technology into the hands of either the next generation of developers and coders and web professionals or to figure out how to create tools and products or



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provide services for people who are doing work that we really care about and support on the ground. So I actually see a lot of that happening.

I'm really excited to see a lot of that happening. At least locally in the DC area, I know that there is a lot of that happening in New York through the networks I have up there. I want to see us do more to get more women and women of color and young people involved, because tech continues to be one of the fastest growing industries, and a regular source of jobs, especially when we had our economic crisis a couple of years back that we're still digging out of, there was no shortage of tech jobs out there. So like the work that we're doing is really they're just scratching the surface of what I think our economy will look like moving forward.

So the more we can do to take the skills that we have and bring them back to the local level and bring them back into communities where they don't have that many opportunities, but they could use this as a catalyst to have a better life. The more I see that happening and the more I'm involved in those kinds of efforts, the more excited I am to be a part of this work. Because you do the work every day because you love it, but there are also a tremendous value in being able to do the work and share the knowledge that you're getting and share the skills that you're learning with other people who can carry that work on after you're done.

Lea Alcantara: Awesome. Man, I feel like we can continue talking for hours on his topic.

Emily Lewis: Yeah, and I feel kind of inspired. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: Yes. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: Because this is a good topic.

Lea Alcantara: Go on forward!

Aisha Satterwhite: I'm glad.



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Lea Alcantara: Well, I mean, I feel like if anything we can leave with is that technology allows an individual to have impact in a larger scale. And that it doesn't have to be super complicated or huge in order to make an impact in someone's life. Before we dive into like the end of our show, I just wanted to mention something that a couple of my high school friends are doing. They work at a company called Dimagi, and they do telemedicine in all around the world like India and Africa and stuff like that.

Emily Lewis: Oh [agrees]

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Lea Alcantara: And what's crazy is the solutions are so simple to make such huge change. My friends Stella [Luk] actually won a huge \$100,000 Government of Canada grant for her program to just help have a safer pregnancy and safer delivery options in Africa simply through cellphone usage. To just have that information in people's hands and then just giving that to somebody in smaller communities and things like that, just so there is process that's safer for people to lower infant deaths and things like that. And for us, we take so much of our technology for granted.

Emily Lewis: [Agrees]

Lea Alcantara: We might think that #advocacy and things like that, that's all we can do. But sometimes giving somebody access to simplest information because certain places are really dire that all they really need is access to clean water or just information on how to make sure that pregnancy delivery is clean and safe. Those kind of things give me hope.

Aisha Satterwhite: Information is definitely still power.

Emily Lewis: Absolutely. It's one of those things that I think is important. I mean, I see it in my own state now, and New Mexico is a very, very poor state. There are parts of this state not far from where I live, if you get in your car and drive a couple of hours, where people just don't have access to like



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Internet, and the internet is Information. It's access to information to learn how to take care of your home or raise cattle or whatever.

Lea Alcantara: Sure.

Emily Lewis: There is information available that people can't access, and so in a lot of ways in my mind, access to the Internet should be like a fundamental right.

Aisha Satterwhite: Absolutely.

Lea Alcantara: All right. So let's end the show on a fun note. [Laughs] Happy upbeat note. We've got our rapid-fire ten questions so our listeners can get to know you a bit better.

Aisha Satterwhite: Okay.

Lea Alcantara: Are you ready, Aisha?

Aisha Satterwhite: I think so.

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: All right, first question, Mac OS or Windows?

Aisha Satterwhite: Mac.

Emily Lewis: What is your favorite mobile app?

Aisha Satterwhite: Oh, Spotify.

Lea Alcantara: What is your least favorite thing about social media?

Aisha Satterwhite: There is too much of it, and you can't turn it off. [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: What profession other than yours would you like to attempt?



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Aisha Satterwhite: I actually wanted to be a college professor for a while.

Lea Alcantara: What profession would you not like to do?

Aisha Satterwhite: I don't have any answer for that. I'm up to try anything.

Emily Lewis: Who is the web professional you admire the most?

Aisha Satterwhite: Probably Michelle Obama. She's my favorite right now.

Lea Alcantara: What music do you like to code to?

Aisha Satterwhite: I'm kind of a fake coder. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]

Aisha Satterwhite: I would say hiphop.

Emily Lewis: What's your secret talent?

Aisha Satterwhite: I have a pretty good way of playing interpreter to people who want stuff built and people who build stuff.

Lea Alcantara: What's the most recent book you've read?

Aisha Satterwhite: I'm reading *The Known World* right now by Edward P. Jones.

Emily Lewis: And lastly, *Star Wars* or *Star Trek*?

Aisha Satterwhite: Oh, *Star Trek*. [Laughs]

Lea Alcantara: [Laughs]

Emily Lewis: [Laughs]



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Lea Alcantara: All right, so that's all the time we have for today. Thanks for joining us!

Aisha Satterwhite: Thank you ladies. This was fun.

Emily Lewis: In case our listeners want to follow up with you, where can they find you online?

Aisha Satterwhite: You can find me on Twitter [@smarttechgirl](#).

[Music starts]

Emily Lewis: Awesome. It was so great to talk to you, Aisha! Thanks!

Aisha Satterwhite: You're welcome ladies! Talk to you later.

Lea Alcantara: We'd now like to thank our sponsors for this podcast, [Visual Chefs](#) and [Pixel & Tonic](#).

Emily Lewis: We also want to thank our partners, [Arcustech](#), [Devot:ee](#) and [EE Insider](#).

Lea Alcantara: And thanks to our listeners for tuning in! If you want to know more about CTRL+CLICK, make sure you follow us on Twitter [@ctrlclickcast](#) or visit our website, ctrlclickcast.com.

Emily Lewis: Don't forget to tune in to our next episode when we're talking to Drew McLellan about the Perch CMS. Be sure to check out our schedule on our site, ctrlclickcast.com/schedule for more upcoming topics.

Lea Alcantara: This is Lea Alcantara ...

Emily Lewis: And Emily Lewis ...

Lea Alcantara: Signing off for CTRL+CLICK CAST. See you next time!

Emily Lewis: Cheers!



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