

ASU MLK 2004 Servant-Leadership Award

I want to thank the Arizona State University Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee for the ASU MLK 2004 Servant-Leadership award. I am privileged to have been inspired by many role models. For example, my family taught me the values of education, resourcefulness, and generosity. In addition, people that I have interacted with at Latino, Native American, Student Government, Churches, and Community Service Organizations have also provided inspiration.

My dad has been my guiding spirit throughout my life. Even though he didn't have a father as a role model, he became an outstanding person, not only as father, but also as a dad, husband, uncle, brother, and a grandfather. Furthermore, he has been an advocate for protecting human welfare and social reform. He has worked in the social services such as the Arizona State Department of Economic Security for over 32 years. Through his example, he kept his family involved in religion and education. Much of my service stems from his encouragement in volunteering my family at Immaculate Heart Church activities for over 20 years. My dad is a pioneer, promoting education, by graduating with a Bachelors Degree at ASU in 1959. With his leadership, he is encouraging his family to continue this tradition.

Similarly, my mom has a very generous spirit that inspires me. Mom shares her skills of cooking, gardening, and healing. Even though she worked graveyard shifts, she would arrive at seven in the morning to wake us up to get ready for school and to prepare our breakfast and our lunch. Mom's generosity is admirable, she is always giving food, clothes, and furniture to relatives, neighbors, as well as the needy. My mom uses her garden for healing. When we are ailing, she treats us with remedies using traditional

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medicinal herbs. Because of her inspiration, I set an educational goal to study holistic medicine. Her example has taught me the importance of giving.

I had a dream and a plan to earn an education while giving back to my community. I volunteer at Tonatierra Community Development Institute, a downtown Phoenix non-profit organization which provides services such as a food bank distributor, Human Rights conferences, and United Nations Indigenous Ambassador site. In conjunction with St. Mary's Food Bank, we prepare and distribute food boxes for needy families and deliver them to the homebound.

At ASU West, I am a senior majoring in the College of Life Science with a concentration in Ecology and Organismal Biology. I have completed Bridges to Biomedical Research Careers, a two year research program, trained as a bio-medical researcher. I plan to pursue my graduate studies in Public Health.

I encourage people, especially children, to use education for a better lifestyle. ASU offers many services that have assisted me and can help you obtain a college education. For example, at ASU West I was helped with financing, advising, and tutoring through the Financial Aid Services, TRIO (Student Support Services) Program, and Research Consulting Center. On campus, I have been an activist with Latino, Native American, and Student Government organizations promoting cultural diversity events.

At this point in my education, I have learned that we need more leaders and I challenge you through education to become those leaders. We need more political leaders like Abraham Lincoln, more civil rights leaders like Martin Luther King, more human rights leaders like Cesar Chavez, more spiritual leaders like Mother Theresa, more peace-makers like Chief Sitting Bull, more educational leaders like Jaime Escalante,

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more medical leaders like Dr. Andrew Weil, and more humanitarian leaders like Kevin Johnson. You, as future leaders of America, can continue Martin Luther King's dream that all people "would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Many role models have graced my path and I would like to thank the following people: Tupac Enrique Acosta, who oversees Tonatierra Community Development Institute; Salvador Reza, who teaches English as Second Language classes and coordinates the Macehualli Day Labor Center; and Benita Sozanski, who administers immigration services and supervises the food bank distribution. Furthermore, I want to thank the creator, my family, and friends for their unconditional support. Once again, I would like to thank the Arizona State University Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee; it has been an honor to serve. Thank you all.