

ASU MLK 2006 Servant-Leader Speech

I would like to thank Rhea Gomez for nominating me for this award; if it weren't for her I would not be standing here today. I would also like to thank the Arizona State University Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Committee. I feel honored to be chosen for this award.

I'd like to tell you a little bit about my background and who's inspired me. My parents migrated to the United States "para un mejor futuro" (a better future). They've instilled the importance of being proud of who I am and where my roots come from. They encouraged me to achieve higher education, and have also taught me the importance of helping others in many ways they can't even imagine. As they formed a new family in the U.S. they always remembered those they left behind. I like to say my parents are like angels; they've helped so many other Colombians migrate to the United States and have continually supported family members and friends in Colombia financially and emotionally. I am fortunate to have been able to visit Colombia and help my parents bring gifts and love to family and friends who desperately need it. Now my parents aren't wealthy people, but they are rich in love. I think they agreed with Mother Teresa when she said, "Let us not be satisfied with just giving money. Money is not enough, money can be got, but they need your hearts to love them. So, spread your love everywhere you go." My parents feel it's important to help those along the way, and have taught me that same ideology.

Due to financial difficulties, my parents were not able to attend a university; therefore they made it their goal to encourage my sisters and me to graduate from a university. My sister Andrea just graduated from ASU in December, so I can now

proudly say both my sisters have followed my parent's dream, and I'm working my way to complete it.

I've volunteered in many different organizations since I was in high school. Spending time at Paradise Valley Hospital helped me comfort those in distress as I translated information to Hispanics who couldn't speak English; yet I also learned I had weak stomach and wouldn't be cut out for a medical career. Helping box medical supplies to help people in Africa fight diseases through Project C.U.R.E., a nonprofit organization, made me appreciate what I have. Through volunteering at Arrowhead Elementary School I found my passion, helping children. After being a lead-intern for the Service Learning Program at ASU, I realized just how much fun it is helping children learn mathematics. Not only did I enjoy the work, I had the opportunity to see how teachers, counselors, and a positive attitude inspire children to work hard and become successful.

Most importantly, volunteering has educated me about the world, opening my eyes to its huge diversity. It's important to know the community that surrounds you. Through community serve you learn and see changes must be made to really make this world a better place. It's important to educate yourself not only through school, but also through experiences. It's through experience that we learn more about ourselves, who and what we stand for. As Malcolm X once said, "If we don't stand for something, we may fall for anything."

Leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., Cesar Chavez, Rosa Parks, and El Comandante Che Guevara, set out to make positive changes they saw were needed for the people. So, what is a leader? It is those who face adversity with courage, compassion,

integrity, dedication, equality, and nonviolence. These leaders and many others have made great changes in our world. We need more leaders like them, especially females; those like African continent's first female president, Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, and most recent, Chilean president Michelle Bachelet. We need to remember what Martin Luther King, Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." So now it's up to us, the new generation, to make changes we find necessary to better our community.

Thank you again to those who have allowed me to speak today. I can't leave without thanking God, as my Aunt has undoubtedly taught me, and my family and friends for their support and love. They've helped make ASU an unforgettable experience, as well as organizations, such as S.T.E.P., Club ASU, Camp Sparky, and Students Speakers Bureau. Lastly I'd like to thank all the donors who have contributed toward my education because it is through their support that I am able to give time to helping the community. I'll let you go with one final thought Margaret Mead, a pioneer in the field of anthropology, once said, "Never believe that a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have." Thank you.