

# ASU MLK Jr. committee honors 2 Student Servant-Leadership awardees



January 3, 2022

Two students have been selected as the **2022 ASU Martin Luther King Jr. Student Servant-Leadership awardees, as a part of Arizona State University's annual MLK Jr. celebration.**

Encouraging the continuation of King's legacy, each year, ASU's MLK Jr. committee selects both a servant and student-servant leader who have made a meaningful difference in their community and in the lives of people around them.



Awardees Roicia Banks and Ivan Quintana.

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For the first time in its 37-year history, the committee, chaired by ASU Vice President for cultural affairs Colleen Jennings-Roggensack, has selected two ASU students to honor with the 2022 Student Servant-Leadership award.

Students Roicia Banks and Ivan Quintana will both be honored at ASU's Martin Luther King Jr. celebration on Jan. 20.

"All of the student applicants this year were top notch and made selection extraordinarily challenging," said Jennings-Roggensack. "When Roicia and Ivan rose to the top two choices, (the committee) embraced doing something we've never done before and decided to honor them both. Their commitment and passion to

leadership demonstrates the tenants of Dr. King and we are proud to honor them as our 2022 student servant leadership awardees."

With this year's theme being "inclusion starts with us," these students' heritage, culture and upbringing shaped them into the resilient and selfless leaders they are today.

## Roicia Banks

Having faced many hardships early on in life from being both a Black and Indigenous woman, to growing up in foster care and being adopted by her late Hopi mother, Banks is the definition of a strong and resilient servant leader.

"I have done so much at my age because I faced some of the hardest challenges early on in my life," Banks said. "I had to figure out what abandonment was and then really try to work through my identity, and being biracial was super challenging. Since I had a lot of these challenges early on, by the time I graduated high school and went to college, I had a good foundation of who I was, and everything just flourished after that."

Banks is a first-generation graduate, having earned a bachelor's degree in both African and African American studies and political science at ASU. She then received her master's degree in social work from the University of Houston. This education and 10 years of experience as a social worker for state and tribal government inspired Banks to make a bigger impact.

"I was definitely an advocate and a fighter for my caseload, my children," Banks said. "But I started to realize that I'm getting solutions and I'm providing solutions, and nobody wants them, or nobody cares to implement them. I realized (the foster care system) is just a functioning oiled machine, and nobody's really interested in preventative measures. I just couldn't take it anymore."

In 2018, Banks became owner and founder of Social Roots LLC, a business that focuses on the improvement of African American and Indigenous communities, that not only preserves families but ensures that both children and adults have the resources needed to prosper in a healthy environment and community.

"I founded Social Roots based off my experiences and what I wanted social work to look like. I wanted to be an answer to my own issues that I saw occurring in my communities," Banks said.

The company expanded its programming to "creatively and culturally impact those who experience trauma," according to its [website](#).

One example of this programming is ATTITUDE: A Mental Health Summit for African American Women. This summit provides a safe space to learn and discuss topics surrounding the mental health of African American female professionals.

"I focus a lot more on culture because I realize culture was a huge part of my growth and my success in identifying who I am, where we come from and our relationships; really doing the unpacking and healing, you know, from our family's trauma," Banks said.

Banks is extremely proud of both her African American and Indigenous culture, and attributes much of her success to the teachings and lessons of her tribe and Hopi mother.

"My mother is a big role model," Banks said. "I didn't realize how much of a servant she was to our family and our community, and it was modeled right in front of me. It's because our culture reflects that so much, it's just second nature and is the character of my tribe. I've had great examples of leadership and helping others."

Banks plans to continue her work at Social Roots LLC and is currently working toward her Master of Legal Studies with an emphasis in Indigenous legal law at ASU.

"To get to the root of what is happening, it comes down to policy, it comes down to law, it comes down to codes, and I really just wanted to be armed with the understanding and knowledge of how to read those codes; how to be able to translate the law and how it impacts us as a tribal nation," Banks said.

Banks feels both humbled and proud to be receiving the Student Servant-Leadership Award from the ASU MLK Jr. committee.

"I think oftentimes we minimize the work that we do, maybe as women or women of color or as Black women. We don't really see the impact or the value measured in the same way. To be in the same category with these people who are life-changers, it's honoring and humbling, but I have to also acknowledge that I'm in that space as well."

## Ivan Quintana

Born and raised in a small town in Northern Mexico by parents who completed the equivalent of a middle school education, Ivan Quintana moved to the U.S. at the age of 18 to fulfill the dreams and aspirations of not only himself, but his family.

"My parents have made a lot of sacrifices for me to be able to get a quality education at the expense of themselves," Quintana said. "They wanted our lives to be a lot different than theirs."

Quintana moved to America and began his secondary education at Mesa Community College. During this two-year period, Quintana experienced the challenges that come with being both a first-generation and low-income college student.

"I just didn't know how college worked," Quintana said. "I was working full time, going to school, attempting to better not only my life, but that of my family."

But Quintana soon found solace in helping others in similar situations through becoming a college completion ambassador for AmeriCorps Arizona Ready for College and Career program, from 2018 to 2019.

During his time in this program, Quintana led informative summer camps for high schoolers, helped high school seniors apply for both college and FASFA, and provided emotional support for both students and families.

"A lot of times, these families were very similar to mine," Quintana said. "It was amazing to see that what they all wanted was a better life for their kids. That gave me the push to continue doing this type of work."

So, while achieving academic success at community college and transferring to ASU in 2019, Quintana continued to work tirelessly to help others achieve their dreams.

Quintana's work spanned from virtually tutoring a third-grader in Los Angeles during the pandemic to being a STEM instructor for Chicanos Por La Causa, where he helped pilot an online scavenger hunt curriculum based on problem-solving, analyzing clues and conducting home art and science projects

Quintana currently works for Trio Grant, which is a set of federally funded college programs created to help first-generation, low income, disabled and veteran students.

"It's really cool to be able to join this sort of family that has existed since the 1960s and was designed to help students like me," Quintana said.

All these experiences have helped Quintana realize that first-generation students have a hidden wealth and strength not found in your typical college scholar, and he encourages first-generation students to look at their life as an asset.

"I think that a lot of times, society outlines what success should look like. I know many students feel like they're not good enough to be in college, but (first-generation college students) have assets of being a good caretaker and looking out for other people," Quintana said. "There is a lot of cultural wealth and cultural capital that we have as first-generation, low-income students; be appreciative of that and of ... the many things that you have that other people don't."

Quintana is expected to graduate this spring with a double major in criminal justice and criminology and public service and public policy. He plans to attend law school in order to advance educational policies at both a state and federal level.

*Activist and award-winning chef [Silvana Salcido Esparza](#) was selected by the ASU MLK Jr. Committee as this year's Servant-Leadership Awardee. She, along with faculty and staff awardees [Neal Lester](#) and [Marcelino Quihonz](#), will be honored with Banks and Quintana on Jan. 20.*

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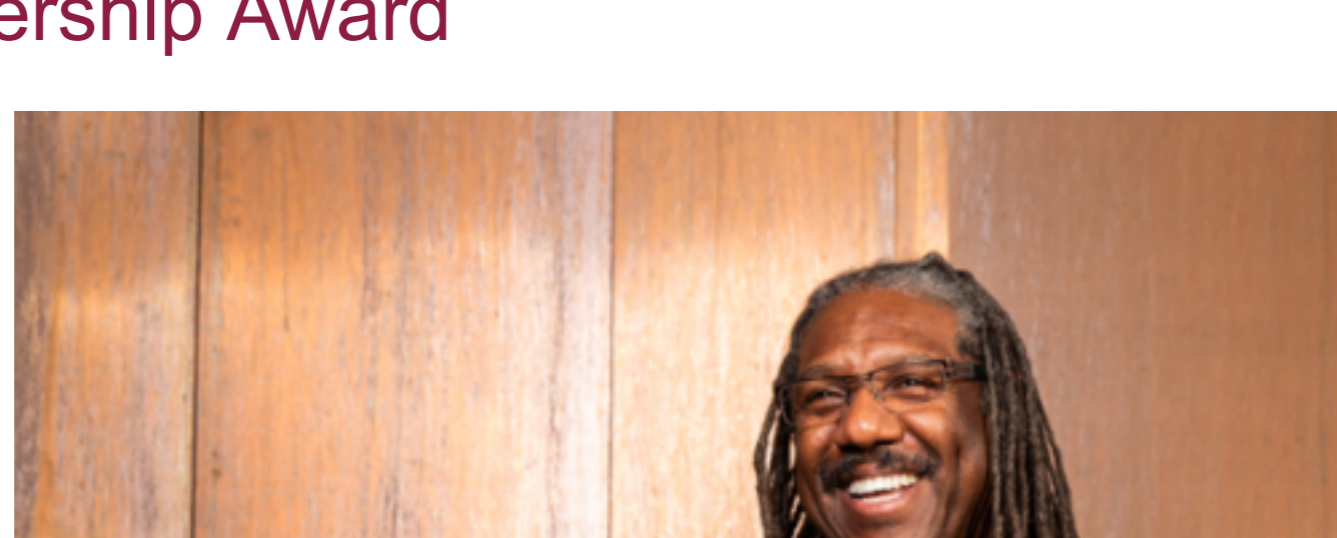
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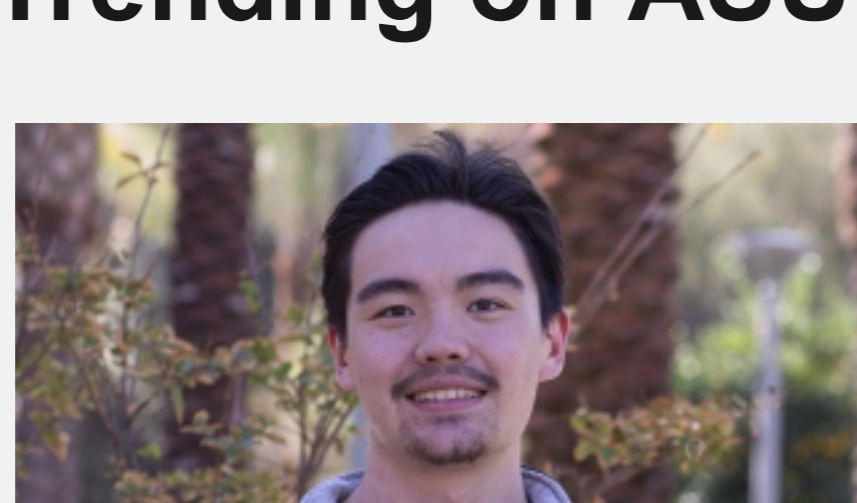
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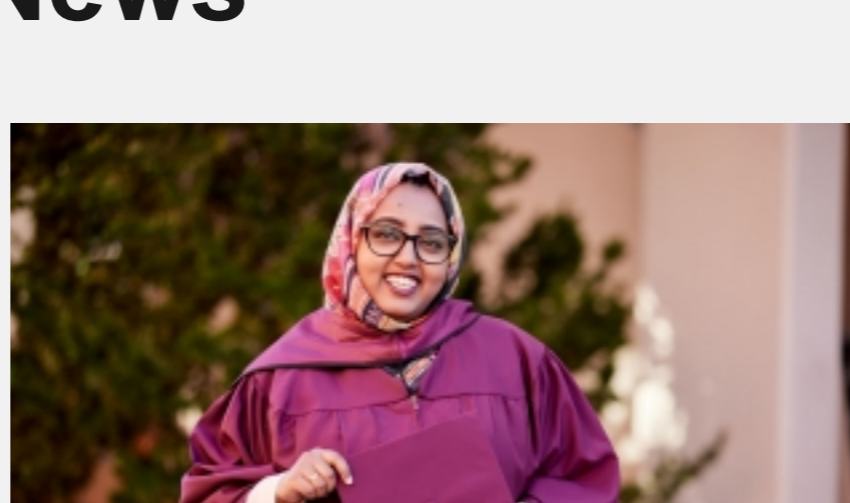
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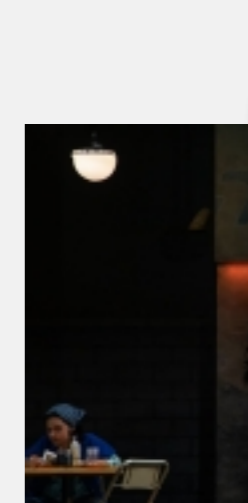
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