

Akueya Karen Vargas  
MPA Grad School Packet  
Statement of Purpose  
07/10/2023

My name is Akueya Karen Vargas, and I have worked diligently with U.S. Representative Derek Kilmer of Washington State's 6th Congressional District by supporting my community in projects focusing on healing, truth, and reconciliation of the injustices and inequalities that racism denies. Additionally, this work leads my studies at the Evergreen State College Tacoma, WA as a black student supporting the people of this great state by highlighting the similarities of reasoning and purpose that come from this work. It's been in the restorative work supporting our youth, next generations citizens, I've been able to witness the incredible change to the disenfranchised by healing, reckoning truths, and reconciliation for our youngest members of this state.

His Excellency the Pope, using an everyday item such as the two pairs of children's moccasins, that completed a pilgrimage and an impassioned idea within research has been my focus for African Americans who carry the harms of today, and that of yesteryear. Two pairs of little beaded moccasins told a story of loss and heartbreak. But, these weighted moccasins spoke, "to us of a path to follow, a journey that we desire to make together. We want to walk together, to pray together, and to work together, so that the sufferings of the past can lead to a future of justice, healing, and reconciliation (2022)." This was the first time witnessing someone who holds much power using his voice to reverberate across this planet about the sorrows that were enacted by the church and its members. Governments across the world took notice, as well as this student believes strongly in the idea, that with hard truths, healing of the people, unity, addressing basic human needs with equity, and reconciling from the past to stop the atrocities of legacy we are all able to bask in the power that is within all of our reach (2022).

My path has been not unlike His Holiness's desire to find this clarity for my community. Studying the facets of history, revealed the layers of truths yet to be reconciled. These truths of the now, enable our next generation's ability to thrive. It was in 2003, as the founder of Living Life Leadership & Living Arts Cultural Heritage Project, that allowed for a renewable source of drive on providing mentorship, teaching cultural histories, along with life skills for youth. While my students were in attendance at the National Youth Leadership Conference in 2011. By the words none other than the late Archbishop Desmond Tutu who propelled these leaders of our community in such a pivotal moment in their lives. Our community will be honoring and commemorating his life and legacy to the gifts he instilled with his wisdom here in the coming weeks.

It is my great hope to be able to be able to act as conduit and bridge builder between the many facets of the Indigenous peoples, County residents, Washington State, the Canadian Government when we move towards international relations. It is engagement with this work that will assist in charting how our county, city, state, and nation come together to do differently, moving forward to address the systemic societal and cultural harms to the many diverse peoples of this nation. By engaging within the MPA program, I can continue this work with my research partner Emory who we have collaborated on several exciting projects that keeps me on my toes and Emory buried in research which is always a good thing.