

 TOWN OF PARADISE VALLEY  
**INDEPENDENT** January 7, 2022

Cullison receives the Paradise Valley MLK 2022  
Diversity Award



**Paula Cullison will accept the 2022 Paradise Valley Martin Luther King Diversity Award on Monday, Jan. 17, during a celebration at Town Hall.**



Dr. Kana Chinasamy

**By Dr. Kana Chinasamy | Guest Commentary**

The Town of Paradise Valley will observe and celebrate Martin Luther King Day on Jan. 17. However, due to the current COVID-19 situation and the safe distancing guidelines, the observance and celebration will be held with a limited number of invitees at the Paradise Valley Town Hall, and be live streamed on YouTube.

The Celebration will begin at 11 a.m. on Monday, Jan. 17.

During the ceremony, a long-time women's rights, social and environmental justice, and peace activist Paula (Giangreco) Cullison will be awarded the 2022 PV MLK Diversity Award. Paula continues to dedicate her time and talents in these areas. It is her life's passion and supports our MLK Theme for this year: Seeing Hope in Changing times.

Paula Cullison believes that with a clear vision, direction, perseverance, determination and support, wonderful things can happen. She believes what the philosopher Gibran said: when you give of yourself, you truly give.

In 1985 Paula Cullison created a major project to celebrate the achievements of culturally diverse women in Arizona. The Year for All Arizona Women involved over 300 volunteers and attracted over 10,000 attendees to 100 plus events.

In 2002, Paula created the Arizona Women's Partnership (AZWP) an all-volunteer 501(c)(3) non-profit to raise funds to support smaller charities which assist underserved women — primarily from the Hispanic, Black, Native, Asian and refugee populations. Over \$535,000 in grants has been awarded throughout Arizona.

Paula often quotes Coretta Scott King: "The greatness of a community is most accurately measured by the compassionate actions of its members, a heart of grace and a soul generated by love."

One of her most recent projects was the In Celebration of Women juried women's art show — selected by a panel of Hispanic, Black, Asian, Native and Anglo women. The opening on March 6, 2020, attracted a record-breaking attendance of over 500 at the Herberger Theater Gallery in Phoenix. The culturally diverse entertainment on the Plaza was reflective of the theme to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment — giving women the right to vote.

Paula's goal is to encourage students to think globally and experience other cultures as a road to peace, to take related classes, study a foreign language, travel, study and/or volunteer abroad.

Understanding the impact of the visual, in 2013 she began to create several international photography exhibits of her own works: Have Passport - Will Travel Journey through the Emerald Isle, To Cuba with Love, and A South American Adventure which she exhibits at college campuses and libraries.

Paula has spoken locally, nationally, and internationally — most notably at the United Nations Conference for Women in Nairobi, Kenya and has covered and written about the UN Conference on the Environment in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil and the World Congress of Women in Moscow, Russia. A world traveler, she has been to over 50 countries.

Whether working on behalf of the United Farm Workers, the United Nations Association, Native Peoples or ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, Paula Cullison is an example of a woman who lives her life with meaning and purpose.

In recognition of her tireless volunteerism, she has been awarded the YWCA Leadership Award for Advocacy, Child and Family Lifetime Achievement Award, BMO Harris Bank Community Service Award, National Bank of Arizona - Amazing Woman Award, Susan G. Komen - Ribbon of Hope Award, Women of Scottsdale - Woman of the Year, among many others.

During the ceremony, the mayor of the Town of Paradise Valley Mr. Jerry Bien-Willner will deliver the welcome and opening remarks followed by a message from the Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Paradise Valley. An address will also be delivered by Brandon Bullock, a representative from the Bahá'i community.

The Bahá'i Faith, the world's newest independent global belief system, teaches the oneness of God, the unity of humanity and the essential harmony of religion. Bahá'is believe in peace, justice, love, altruism and unity. The Bahá'i teachings promote the agreement of science and religion, the equality of the sexes and the elimination of all prejudice.

The commitment of the mayor and the Town of Paradise Valley together with the Baha'is to promote the ideals of Dr. Martin King Jr. goes beyond just the observation and celebration. For the past 24 years, many projects have been carried out in the community to further Dr. King's legacy, like the Annual Food Drive and the Essay competition in schools on Dr. King's Themes.

Please join us for the live stream event on Monday, Jan. 17, at 11 a.m. Access to this live stream will be on our website [www.MLKParadiseValley.org/livestream](http://www.MLKParadiseValley.org/livestream).

During the program, the Diversity Award recipient will be honored, and Paradise Valley Martin Luther King Day Essay Contest winners awarded. This celebration this year will be by invitation only, following guidelines by the CDC such as social distancing, and masks.

*Editor's Note: Dr. Kana Chinasamy is a member of the Paradise Valley Martin Luther King Day planning committee, and a member of the Paradise Valley Bahá'is.*