

Vitalis Lanshima

November 20, 2017

Dear Metro Council Members and Future Colleagues:

Please accept this letter and the attached resume as confirmation of my interest in the 21st District Metro Council Seat.

I believe in Louisville, and the immense potential that permeates this county. My life is the embodiment of the American Dream that manifested itself right here in this great city. The true genius and promise of Louisville and America is that anyone regardless of where you are born and what you look like can write the next great chapter in the American story. My story began in a small village in Africa, when a 14-year old teenager refused to accept the peasant farming lifestyle that was practiced by his father and grandfather, as well as other ancestors before them. His insatiable thirst for a better life led him to leave his ancestral home and walk about 200 miles northwards, to a small town that provided better opportunities. This move by my father was the catalyst to my American story.

Like many families in Louisville, I grew up poor, living in Nigeria and did not have many opportunities. By the time I was twelve, any hope that I had to become successful was dashed when a high jump cross bar I was carrying touched an electric power line and I was electrocuted. This accident resulted in the amputation of both of my arms and seemed to cripple any hopes I had of escaping poverty. I knew that I could become successful, but I needed a place and a community that would empower me and support my aspirations. Louisville was that beacon of hope for me. After relying on my family and friends for all my daily needs for 5 years, I decided to empower myself. I spent the following years teaching myself a new way of life. With empowerment came aspiration. I enrolled in 7th grade at the age of eighteen and I worked hard to become a world-class athlete. In 2000, I was recruited by Bellarmine University and became the first international Paralympic athlete recruited by any college in the United States.

Despite the fact that I arrived in Louisville without any money or family connections, I was motivated by a simple, powerful idea -- that in America, and right here in Louisville, if I work hard and remain steadfast, I can be successful and play my part in building a better community. That is what I have committed myself to doing for the last fifteen years. I became involved in my community from my first week in the United States. I was elected to serve as a Student Government Representative for my Freshman Class. I volunteered for almost everything on and off campus while carrying a full load and meeting my obligations as a student-athlete. Bellarmine University recognized my service to the community with the Lenihan Award for Leadership & Community Service for each of the three years I attended the institution, becoming the first student to receive the award for three years in a row. I was also a recipient of the Rotary Club of Louisville International Scholarship, and was part of the prestigious Brown Scholars Program.

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When Councilman Jim King had an opening for an intern during my senior year of college, I applied, because I believe in the potential, the work, and responsibility of Metro Council. Even though I was not offered the internship, my resolve in serving this community was strengthened. I decided to invest my time in the youth in our community as a public school teacher, and public speaker with the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. I have served many segments of our community. I previously served as the chairperson for Conway Middle School Advisory Council and served on the school's Site-Based Decision Making Council (SBDM). I have served on the Kentucky Education Association (KEA) and Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA) Board of Directors. During the 2010 campaign, I co-chaired Mayor Greg Fischer's Disability Policy Committee. I am a Kentucky Colonel and a graduate of Leadership Louisville's Bingham Fellows Program. I am also a member of Young Professionals Association of Louisville. I currently serve as a member of the Metro Democratic Club Board of Directors, The Friends of the Iroquois Library, and on the Kentucky Democratic Party Central Executive Council.

Neighborhoods in District 21 are bursting with untapped potential and are in dire need of revitalization. As your colleague, my top priorities will be to work with every Councilperson to find ways to stimulate economic development in the area and create safe neighborhoods. I hope to see a revitalized Woodlawn Business District and create the 3rd Street Business Corridor that would be posited to become Kentucky's Multicultural Business Hub, highlighting all the multicultural and unique flavors that District 21 and Louisville has to offer. I will support businesses and entrepreneurs in District 21 by partnering with organizations to create and sponsor programs that will provide mentoring and business workshops, and find ways to bridge the digital literacy divide for citizens from low income neighborhoods to stay digitally connected. I will promote research-based public safety initiatives and create a funding stream for Neighborhood and Block watches to bring citizens together with law enforcement to deter crime and make our communities safer.

Creating opportunities and inspiring hope and aspiration in the lives of our citizens are big challenges, but taking on challenges is nothing new to me. I am ready and willing to take on these challenges to enable our neighbors to write the next great chapter in the American story. Our community's insatiable thirst for a better life is the catalyst for my desire to work to make our community a better place to live and do business. I hope, and ask that you allow me to take on these challenges alongside you.

Best regards,

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4456 South 6th Street ■ Louisville, KY 40214



PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

BELLARMINE UNIVERSITY, Louisville, KY

2010 - Present

Adjunct Professor

- Provide classroom instruction in Social Entrepreneurship and Social Justice
- Facilitate learning and communicate effectively with students from diverse backgrounds
- Design curriculum materials and course outlines, and evaluate student work

JEFFERSON COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS, Louisville, KY

2008 - 2017

Special Education Teacher

- Implement individualized education program for each student as specified
- Identify and implement goals tailored to the student's individual needs and abilities
- Employ diverse techniques to promote active learning
- Exercise flexibility within the classroom by addressing students' needs

THE ASPIRE GROUP, Louisville, KY

2007 - Present

Founder

- Conceived this company from startup to capitalize on sports and entertainment market
- Subsidiaries: *Triple Crown Sports, ASPIRE Food + Beverage, and ASPIRE Entertainment*
- Responsible for marketing, finance, communications, research and development
- Distributed marketable next-generation products in sports and entertainment, distribution in the United States, Africa, and Brazil.
- Deliver executive-level expertise to other organizations on a short-term engagement basis

ASPIRE With Vitalis, Louisville, KY

2006 - Present

Motivational and Keynote Speaker

- Serve as a keynote speaker at various conferences and events for up to 7,500 attendees in the United States, England, Nigeria and Australia
- Provide pro bono workshops and trainings at camps and conferences
- Topics covered focus on Education, Christian Faith, Self-Empowerment, and Overcoming Life Challenges

THOROUGHbred RESEARCH GROUP, Louisville, KY

2004 - 2006

Research Analyst

- Collaborated with clients in a wide range of public, private and non-profit industries
- Monitored customer responses, voter perception, political issues and prepared briefing notes
- Served as project manager; analyzed demographic, geographic, and psychographic data
- Conducted research in food service, technology, banking, retail, and healthcare industries

BELLARMINE UNIVERSITY - Health and Fitness Center, Louisville, KY

2004

Intern

- Provided support on all phases of media and public relations, including website development
- Encouraged student involvement in Athletics and Intramural programs through publicity
- Created and enhanced a positive image of the organization through website publications, brochures, posters and signage

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EDUCATION AND CREDENTIALS

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY - School of Professional Studies, Boston, Massachusetts
Doctoral Candidate, Education Leadership and Policy (Expected 2018)

INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTHEAST - School of Education, New Albany, Indiana
Administration and Principal Certification (2012)

GEORGETOWN COLLEGE - School of Education, Georgetown, Kentucky
Masters in Education (2009)

NORTHCENTRAL UNIVERSITY - School of Business & Technology, Prescott, Arizona
Masters in Business Administration (2007)

BELLARMINE UNIVERSITY, Louisville, Kentucky
Bachelor of Arts, Communication and Psychology (2005)

LEADERSHIP ACTIVITIES, HONORS AND RECOGNITIONS

- Leadership Louisville - **Bingham Fellows Program** Class of 2012
- **Fellowship of Christian Athletes** – Keynote Speaker and Volunteer
- **Kentucky Democratic Party** Central Executive Committee - Committee Member
- The **Friends of the Iroquois Library** - Board Member
- **Kentucky Education Association (KEA)** - Board Member
- **Jefferson County Teachers Association (JCTA)** - Board Member
- **Paralympic World Record Holder** in 100, 200, and 400 meters
- **Kentucky Colonel** - Conferred by Governor Steve Beshear, 2012
- **Co-Chair Disability Policy Committee** - Greg Fischer for Mayor Policy Team, 2010
- **Who's Who** Among College Students In America, 2005
- **Laureus World Sports Award** – Sportsperson of the Year with a Disability, 2004
- **Lenihan Award for Leadership & Community Service**, 2003-2005
- Bellarmine University **Brown Scholar's Leadership Program**, 2003-2005
- **Spina Bifida Association** of Kentuckiana
- **Relay for Life** at Bellarmine University - Sponsorship Chair
- Conway Middle School **Advisory Council** - Chairperson
- Conway Middle School **Site-Based Decision Making Council (SBDM)**
- Young Professionals Association of Louisville (YPAL)
- Metro Democratic Club (MDC) - Board of Directors
- Louisville Young Democrats - Finance Director