

Good morning/evening Neighbors:

My name is Alexandra Dace Denito. I am a mix-race, French creole, new immigrant, originally from a French Island on the East side of Africa, called Reunion Island. I obtained my PhD in Molecular Endocrinology, after completing a Masters in Biochemistry and Genetics, from the University of Aix-Marseille II, France. I arrived in Rockville in 1997 to accept a position as a Post-doctoral fellow at the National Cancer Institute, NIH on a renewable two-year contract. Twenty-two years later, I am still here, with a full Citizenship, in Rockville because even though I came for a job, I found a home, a family and much more.

I made the choice of becoming a scientist at a young age; I made the decision that I would like to help people, despite my shyness and awkwardness at the time. When you dismiss money as essential but a distraction, and beauty as superficial, except in the intracellular details in the context of biological evolution, being a researcher allows you to contribute to Humanity. You can do this while protected by the four walls of a lab and contribute to your neighbors' life anonymously. Extending my knowledge base has been one of the goals of my Life, for Science and knowledge are the pillars of Truth, Facts and Wisdom. I believe we need more of those things, especially right now.

After fifteen years in Scientific laboratories, I decided to take a job where I could work from home, prioritizing the care of my children (now 15 and 13 years old) over the pursuit of a career, my son needing more attention with a speech disability and Attention Deficit Disorder. I have been a "full-time home Mom" and a Biomedical Indexer, contractor for National Library of Medicine, simultaneously, for twelve years now.

Mothers, Parents, are the ultimate servants. This alone does not qualify for a job as a Public servant, even though making sure that the offspring that you produced perpetuates a Legacy of Love and Respect outside of your home is essential to the Public. But what you do for people outside of your family, without expecting anything in return, does qualify as Public service. It is true that nowadays, some people have this tendency to get into Public service to promote themselves, forgetting that they are supposed to help others and respect the taxpayers' money.

Even though I was determined on spending my Life behind the scenes, sometimes, Life takes a different turn, and you realize that you cannot be silent anymore. Grief is what pulled me into the Public arena four years ago (2015). I petitioned the City government to get the name of my recently deceased friend and neighbor memorialized through renaming a Park after her. I testified in front of the Recreation and Parks Department Advisory Board, despite of aversion for public speaking. Then, I testified again in Open Forum in front of Mayor and Council, where I found out that my request got traction among other City residents.

I should not have been surprised by this simple success, but I was. See, years before, my 18year old-self was involved in Humanitarian action in Madagascar, bringing a 100kilos-case full of medicine to a maternity ward in a barren region on the southwestern side. I was sucked into a debate about how to improve the quality of care delivered without running water and sewage. I soon realized that the medicine brought was like a drop in the proverbial, but dusty and sun baked hot bucket. Political Will to

help make the trip a full success was lacking, the inhabitants of that country not entitled to petitioning their government. I, therefore, never took the First Amendment for granted.

After this first success as advocate in Rockville, I decided that I could be more active, being a member of Lincoln Park Civic Association (LPCA) already. As Vice-President of LPCA, I testified against relocating the School Bus depot in our neighborhood at several meetings, including the Public hearing of the County Planning Commission in Silver Spring. I also advocated to obtain a School bus for Lincoln Park High School students, collected support and signatures among residents and petitioned MCPS Transportation Department successfully. As President of LPCA, I testified many times in front of the City Planning Commission and the Historic District Commission to make sure that Lincoln Park Historic District Plan is respected, to save and preserve what we can, while promoting economic development and opportunities around our neighborhood. LPCA also advocated for and obtained more side-walks for pedestrian safety.

As a Member of Board of Trustees of the Rockville Science Center (2016-2018), I focused on collaborating with another non-profit organization to distribute free Science books and participated in conferences and camps for minority children. As Member of the Executive Committee of NAACP-Montgomery County branch and Co-Chair of the Health Committee (2016-2018), I invited Dr. Liu, DHHS Chief Epidemiologist, to educate on the Health status of County residents and morbidity zip-code by zip-code. I am also currently a volunteer for the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Solid Wastes and Recycling.

My Goals for this short time, if considered:

- Making sure that residents' issues are addressed, and that the upcoming elections do not interfere with daily government role and services.
- Advocate for more funds from the County for our schools.
- Make sure that economic development occurs in areas already programmed for redevelopment (i.e. Twinbrook area, Downtown and North Stonestreet). Keep working on Long-range Planning to include environmentally friendly options.
- Advocate for more diversity and install inclusion programs City-wide, starting with establishing a neighborhood interconnector (transportation).

Rockville's Diversity is what made me feel at home and want to raise my children here. But to show Pride in our Diversity, opportunities should be presented equally across different ethnicities, abilities, gender identities and socioeconomic groups. Please, recognize that Rockville's residents and workers are intellectually above average, whatever the ethnicity, and they all deserve the same respect.

Thank you.

Alexandra

