**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BIGRAM ZAYAS**

Hello everyone and welcome!!!! This weekend, the world celebrates an icon... a myth... a person whose time here on this planet has made an incomparable difference... someone who has given endless joy to people... warmed hearts... inspired minds... provoked intense joy... placed endless smiles on countless faces... of course I’m referring to **Amy Poehler** (**HS-it’s also Nick Jonas’ birthday if you think it would be funnier to say that one instead**), but we didn’t get invited to **THAT** party, so let’s make the best of **this** one!!! (**Wait for the laugh**)... you **know** I’m kidding... we’re here to celebrate the milestone birthday of the hippest, smoothest, kindest, most talented and **newest** member of **AARP**, my brother, my friend, my **lodestar**... I hear that’s a hot buzzword now... my brother, Marc. I’d like to acknowledge our friend, Jorge Perez, for allowing us to gather in this wonderful venue.... It’s also meaningful and symbolic that we’re here, celebrating Marc, in this incredible museum, because let’s face it.... there were several times when Marc was a kid, that I really just wanted to grab him by the neck and hang him on a wall.... (**Wait for the laugh**)... but we **BOTH** outgrew that phase. Now I cannot imagine having a better friend and comrade by my side, experiencing life, and enjoying the magnificent view we are both so incredibly blessed to share.

For those of you that know us... and that better be everyone, you know that I’m not usually the front man... the spokesperson... but tonight, I feel compelled to say a few words... Life has always been interesting with a brother like Marc.... we started off humble... we’ve kept it real... we honor our roots and appreciate every hard earned blessing, and at times, while we may have been separated by years... by miles... by circumstances, somehow, even at a distance, I knew what was going on. Marc has always been the kind of person that inspired discussion and gave us all “something to talk about.” The rhythm of his early life was established with his innate love of bongos... and **babysitters**... Long ago someone coined the expression... “Give me the child and I will show you the man...” Even as a kid, romance and an innate appreciation of women were high on Marc’s list of passions.... I guess those two qualities joined to form a perfect storm of self expression when, at just fifteen years of age, Marc was compelled by the love of a hot young woman... to throw himself into a **BOXING RING**... and belt out an a cappella version of “Mandy.... ” Hey... it worked for Barry Manilow... (**Wait for the laugh**). He may not have known how to box... he may not have won the heart of the fair Marlene, but his fate was sealed.... and his love of music.. his passion for the power to perform and give emotion and meaning to his life and those whose lives he touches, has only grown sweeter and more intense through the years.

Thanks to Marc’s incredible gifts and legendary generosity, we who love him and stand by him have joined him on the ride of a lifetime... the “cutlery” may be a little bit more polished, but the connection... the love... the true brotherhood we share, is just as real as it was back then on \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Street In the Bronx.... How many times have the two of us pulled all nighters... and yes... we have the wine cork collection to prove it!!!...getting up... feeling like crap... resolving to give up drinking.... then we came to our senses and realized it would be better to just give up **THINKING**... (**Wait for the laugh**). Over the years, we’ve had a **mystical**, almost **unspoken** connection.... the way we understand each other... it’s **strange** but beautiful... after all, I **mumble** and he has a **hearing problem** (**Wait for the laugh**) but we **get** each other... at a level that’s rare and wonderful and it really blows me away when I think about it.

Marc, it’s such a privilege to be your brother and it’s an honor to celebrate you tonight. I don’t know where the hell Marlene is, but I have a feeling she’s eating her heart out... (**Wait for the laugh**). All jokes aside...the determination and passion you showed back then, at fifteen years old was and is rare and incredible. The power of your love... for music... for your kids... for your family... for women... for self expression... for righteousness and justice... for displaced children... has literally changed all of us and made the world a much better place, and we realize this more than ever when we need “lodestars” like you to inspire and guide us.... every day, you are **OUR** gift and tonight we celebrate **YOU**...

(**If you choose to provide everyone with beers, make it a surprise... maybe the cans can be under the table and you can say**) Ladies and gentlemen, I invite all of you to “lift a can” as I propose a toast:

Marc, you’re the kind of person that, like the Energizer Bunny, keeps on going and going and going... but tonight, right now, I invite all of us to **STOP**...for a moment... especially **YOU**... and take in just how much you mean to all of us. Your world turns at a break neck pace, but right now, in **THIS** moment, **take it all in**. We who love you celebrate **ALL** of you. When we count our blessings, you’re at the top of the list. May you have a happy, healthy, **INCREDIBLE** birthday.... and may the party.... and the **LOVE**... continue for the next **ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS... YIKES**!!! Happy birthday, Brother!!! Thank you all!!