**EULOGY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**GODWIN KWAWU**

Hello everyone and thank you all for being here today. On October 8th of this year, the world got a little dimmer. It lost some of the brilliance that lights the way for so many people. Our mother, Joyce Makor Akosua Bekpo Kwawu left this earth for her eternal glory in Heaven. Although we, and all of you, will greatly miss her, this service is a celebration of the life, love, wisdom, and legacy left by our wonderful mother. It is truly a heartwarming testimony to our mother’s memory that so many of you are sharing this tribute to her today. Mom made a difference in the lives of so many people, both here in her home town and abroad.

Someone once said that “The natural state of motherhood is unselfishness. When you become a mother, you are no longer the center of your own universe. You relinquish that position to your children.” Our mother lived in that natural space of unselfish love, guidance, care, and devotion for each one of her seven children. She worked for, cared for, watched over and showed us the way no matter how old we were, no matter where life or circumstances found us... or her. Although she is no longer with us physically, with each memory we share and with each bit of wisdom we pass along... with each lesson of hers that we, in turn, teach others, our mother lives.

To know our mother’s story... to learn the story of us, her children, allows people to understand how special she was and how this extraordinary woman’s contribution to life made such a tremendous difference to all who were blessed to know her. Our father passed when we were very young. Mom, as a young woman, had to take care of all seven of us single-handedly with no help from either the government or relatives. She worked very hard to educate all of us so that we reached our own individual potential to the best of our abilities, even though she had little. What she lacked in physical resources, she more than made up for with creativity, devotion, and determination to provide for us. She was strict and protective of us even when we reached adulthood. Some of my brothers and sisters.... okay ... and maybe me .... sometimes... resisted this cautious attitude, but we know she did that because of her love for us and I know I speak for all of us when I say that we are sorry for any hurt we may have caused. When a child has a parent that watches over one so closely, we may not appreciate... at the time.... what that attention really means... we may not fully understand why, in certain situations, the freedom we thought we may have been entitled to was not such a good idea, but looking back, I believe we all see more clearly the gift of our mother’s love and attention. There is an expression that teaches us that, “Hindsight is 20/20.” Looking back on youthful times provides explanations as lessons of love and care are rekindled. Our mother was a trader and as such, and as a businesswoman whose first priority was taking care of her family, she faced the eternal inner struggle.... how does one care for her family while building a business that would provide for that family? Sometimes she had to go on business trips to several towns to sell her wares, and we were left at home with the older siblings taking care of the younger ones. Sometimes neighbors stopped by to check on us. She made many sacrifices just to make sure we were okay... that we were taken care of, got our education, and understood what it meant to be a person of character. Mom worked so hard in order that we would be able to live comfortably, and for that, we are most grateful.

When we are children, our perspective of adults can be disproportionate. We may think that adults are bigger, taller, more imposing than they might be, but I have to say that our mother was truly and unmistakably larger than life. Mom also had an instinctive and unshakable sense of justice and fairness. She was very loving, generous, compassionate and respectful of all people and her kindness and consideration of others, especially those in need, knew no... or very few, boundaries.  Even though she had a lot of mouths to feed, she extended her hand and her home to other kids from the countryside who were sometimes sick and neglected in order to take care of them and raised each child as though they were one of her own. And as a result, she shared a bit of herself and that light and compassion continued to multiply. She cared a lot about people and always volunteered to help whenever she was called upon, whether it was a marriage ceremony or child naming, as mediator in conflict resolution or helping financially when she was able to do so, and more importantly, supporting grieving families and attending funerals, Mom showed all of us what it meant to have compassion and respect for all of her fellow human beings, no matter who they may be, no matter their station in life. She used to attend funerals in our hometown on weekends and that brought her closer to family and relatives back home. Human connection was clearly so important to her and because of her involvement with her community and beyond, she had a good knowledge of how we are related to people in both the maternal and paternal family. She was very active in the Agbozume community where she was born and raised. In her own small way, she tried to make the world a better place for human kind, quietly behind the scenes. I have to say again, that as I look around at all of you, my heart, and those of my brothers and sisters, are warmed by the sight of all of you gathered here with us today.

Our mother was a very religious person. Her entire life was driven by faith in God. This shaped her destiny. She was baptized and confirmed as an Anglican. She loved her church family and was a member of the Guild of the Good Shepherd, The Interested Group, The Christian Love Thy Neighbor Society and a few more now defunct groups. She imbued us with good moral values for which we are grateful. Without such values most of us would have gone astray. The Bible teaches us, “Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.” Mom made sure we were cared for in every aspect in life that means something and that builds strength, character, and goodness, and finding strength in her faith was one of the great guides throughout her life. It taught her devotion, clarity, care for her family, friends, and most importantly, strangers, and provided a constant mirror into which she would look, think, and consider the path that true goodness and humanity would show her... and then she **SHARED**.

Our mother was an entrepreneur who at one point had several businesses and was good at whatever she chose to do. Sometimes we wondered where she got that energy from. Such was her passion that we had to beg her to finally retire in her seventies. People have said, “If you love what you do, then you never have to work a day in your life.” Work was Mom’s passion, mainly because it connected her to people....her businesses supported others, and the products enriched people’s lives. (**Name two or three businesses your mother had or products she sold**). Whether she was selling\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ or providing \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for an appreciative customer base, this was a woman who **KNEW** how to connect with people, how to engage, and how to inspire. Indeed, she was a very hardworking and independent person.

The singer, Lauryn Hill, has said, “The strong mother doesn’t tell her cub, ‘Son, stay weak so that the wolves can get you.’ She says, ‘Toughen up. This is reality we’re living in.’” Although today is an opportunity to recall the positive and share the many contributions of our mother, please do not think that all was “smooth sailing.” Our Mom was loved and admired by many, but she had her own detractors who misunderstood and misjudged her. She used to remind us of what she had been through and she made sure we knew that she had the scars to show. She wouldn’t cave in to criticism for what she believed in or bow to any false authority. She was a courageous person, very authentic and down to earth.  With her “what you see is what you get”. Dada, meaning mother in Ewe, as we fondly called her, was a powerful, loving, and inspiring force in our lives. That she stood up for herself, didn’t bow to those less than she was, didn’t succumb to petty criticism, showed all of us that there is truth in the expression that our enemies... that adversity... that challenges are our best teachers. Within the lessons of goodness and faith, compassion and devotion, lives the lesson that taught us, “That which doesn’t kill us makes us stronger.”

Joyce Makor Akosua Bekpo Kwawu was a woman who really lived and left her mark on so many people and we are all blessed to have known her, to have been taught by her, to have been loved by her. Her influence will be felt here, in Accra, of course, and in the United States, where she became a permanent resident but always maintained her devotion to her home country. As we share stories and as we teach the lessons our mother so lovingly taught us, her spirit will live on... not only in the seven of us, her children, but in all of you. So as you go on with your lives and some gesture or story reminds you of this powerful woman, **smile**. Share her story and her lessons with strangers. I invite you to keep our mother’s light and influence burning bright and let it guide even those that may not have known her... because after all... look how she’s strengthened and supported each one of us.

As I said in the beginning, Mom left us on Monday October 8, 2018 for eternal glory..... But **OH**!!! What a life worthy of celebration! We will greatly miss her but I **KNOW** she will watch over us and guide us as long as we honor her spirit and keep her memory alive.

Thank you all!!