**BIRTHDAY SPEECH**

**FOR**

**JOSEPH AJIBESIN**

Hello everyone!!! I want to thank you all for being here as we celebrate a very special birthday for an even more special someone. …. If you’re here, you’ve been inspired by, laughed with, learned from, our “birthday girl.” We all know she “has a way about her,” and we are here to honor her tonight.

Not too long ago, when Barack Obama was presented with the official portraits for him and Michelle, he had this to say… “I want to thank you for capturing everything I love about her… her grace, her intelligence, and the fact that she is **FINE**….” Barack… you took the words right out of my mouth!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I can probably think of a million adjectives to define my wife, (**do you want to add**) … and you **KNOW** I can argue my point and come up with descriptive phrases… (**and wait for the laugh**) but Lami, **none** come close to really capturing your authentic, brilliant, magnificent essence. You do it all, wonderfully… wife, mother, powerhouse professional, daughter, sibling, (**will her parents and siblings be there?**), friend, colleague, neighbor… and you do it with grace, style, compassion, intelligence… and let me say this… **YOU** are “Gone with the wind **FABULOUS**!!!” (**Look up and say**) Do you hear **THAT**, Kenya??? (**Wait for the laugh**). OH… one other thing…. If the rumor about Rinna leaving Beverly Hills is true, I love you **MADLY** but we **ARE NOT** moving to the 90210… although I don’t think **ANYONE** could possibly make a better Real Housewife than **YOU**!! (**Wait for the laugh**).

It’s believed that Former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt said, “A woman is like a teabag. You never know how strong it is until it’s in hot water.” From my rarified point of view, that of very blessed husband to Lami, let me tell you… she can brew it…. sweeten it….pour it …. share it… **spill it**… all without missing a beat. Even I am astounded at how she manages to do it all, and do it so well… I’ve now known her for thirteen years and have been married to this goddess for nine years… I look for the mirrors… the tricks she might have up her sleeve…. a secret playbook…. Haven’t found them yet. With Lami, her power is purely in her nature, and what’s even more fascinating is that with each birthday of hers that we celebrate, with each trip around the sun, the patina and aura that surround her continues to shine brighter every day.

“By day,” Lami is a talented, accomplished executive, working her professional magic as a Partner in one of the Big Four accounting firms in the United States. She has a keen eye for detail and an even sharper instinct, always finding the path to financial and corporate success. Her dedication has been known to move mountains…. Her accomplishments and distinctions are many…. with all that, she is an amazing mother to our two children, Femi and Dami.

… And she is an amazing partner to **me**. Lami motivates me like no other – she speaks life into me everyday and because of her, I believe that anything is possible. One of my wife’s most admirable traits… and I think by now you either know first hand, or can guess, is that she truly believes **ANYTHING** is possible. From experience, she is profoundly aware of the importance of putting in the work to achieve things that most people that come from our background would not even bother to attempt. The word “**No**” is an alien concept to this dynamo…. Except, well… when it comes to me or the kids wanting to \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ (**Name something funny or annoying that you might do and wait for the laugh**). Lami is the living embodiment of the words of the late actress and humanitarian, Audrey Hepburn, who said, “Nothing is impossible. The word itself says, ‘I’m **POSSIBLE**!!” Anyone who has had the privilege to observe Lami, even for a short time, knows that she is the definition of possibility.

Somehow, she achieves all these things…the career… the friendships… the projects… the requisite viewing of **The Bachelor**… (**wait for the laugh**)… being a loving and devoted mother to two fantastic children.. and on top of all **THAT**, she’s the world’s greatest “husband wrangler.” She just gets it all done – and makes it look easy. Believe me, I know it’s hard… she’s up early in the morning and still up late at night working, building a whole M&A practice from scratch, even with the demands of raising little children, yet she doesn’t miss a beat, making sure we are all emotionally balanced at home. She keeps us watered and fed… she tends to our needs… she keeps a smile on our faces and makes sure that we always feel loved, nurtured, and appreciated.

Oh!! And did I mention… Lami is a girl’s girl. She loves being girly. She loves being pretty … this part definitely comes naturally to her… and of course, she loves the finer things in life. Lami is one of those people who’s got this “thing” figured out – look back at older snapshots of her life and history in college – and it’s easy to see that she’s the one with lots of friends, who went to the best parties, and **STILL** managed to get straight A’s and make it to church .

With all the elegance and class Lami has, there’s one memory I have…. I’ll never forget the time early on in our dating life, maybe a few months in… we were steady but it was early. She came to Chicago and we went to Shrine – some of you may remember Shrine. Anyway… we were there having a good time when one guy just kept mean mugging me the whole night… I’d seen him around but didn’t know him. He randomly walked up to me towards the end of the night and grabbed my collar like he wanted to fight… **WHOA**!!!! There was an immediate commotion… picture this… you’ve got a tall guy and a 50cent (in his buff days) looking like they are about to face off. Anyway… I was assessing the situation as quickly as I could… concerned about those around us, and in particular, my sweet, innocent, girly girl of a companion, trying to figure out what was going on… I looked at my Lami to make sure she was OK… and wouldn’t you know??? She had a wine bottle in her hand ready to crack this guy’s head open if things got worse! (**Wait for the laugh**). That was probably a benchmark… a turning point in our relationship… one of the moments I remember thinking to myself, “I am **DEFINITELY**. marrying her!” (**Wait for the laugh**).

To know… **REALLY** know Lami, is to know she is always happy. Sure, the shopping, the glamour, the intellectual and professional demands, the Peppa Pig… the Trash Trucks… (**name something both your son and daughter love and wait for the laugh**) the details she juggles day in and day out provide infinite opportunities …. But give her music and a stupid, mindless TV show like The Bachelorette… and my girl is good to go. I cannot describe how much of a blessing that is. There’s a great deal to be said about simple pleasures.

When we are younger, as kids or young adults, we hear from our elders that life is truly lived in the little moments… the unexpected smiles, the spontaneous laughs, the arguments that wind up bringing us closer together once resolved. Lami and I have come a long way in the past thirteen years. I’ve had the privilege to watch this woman learn and grow and become even **more** beautiful… if that’s possible. I’ve celebrated a baker’s dozen birthdays with her, and I can’t wait to celebrate one hundred more. I am thankful to God for giving me a happy, brilliant woman. Lami, to me, **EVERY DAY** is your birthday. Every day the kids and I get to be with you is a celebration. The accomplishments… the possessions… the material things we have are great… they’re all gravy… to be with you is the **EVERYTHING** in my life. I promise you that I will continue to be inspired by your **MAGIC** and will do whatever it takes, whatever is in my power, for the rest of my life, to see to it that you’re as happy as you are today. (**Do you want to have one long stemmed red rose to present to her and say**)… Lami, will you accept this rose?? Happy Birthday!!! I love you!!