

# Full Circle Speech

University of Illinois @ Chicago

February 23, 2010

Good evening Dean Lenway, CoBA faculty and staff, and fellow alumni.

Today has very special meaning for me. In addition to being recognized for personal and professional achievements by my alma mater, I can now say that I've come "full circle".

I was born at the University of Illinois Hospital where my father was on staff at the College of Nursing at that time. At age nine I was told that I would die from Lupus and was transferred to U of I for extended treatment and special care. After a series of attempts to obtain a college degree elsewhere, I transferred to and graduated from U of I. Nearly three decades later, I am alive, Lupus-free, and *very* grateful.

In short, I was born here [U of I], I was treated here, I was educated here and now I'm being honored here. I've come full circle...

Thank you: Alumni Leadership Academy Committee and Dean Lenway for this special honor.

Thank you Dad for the gift of a debt-free college education at the best of schools and also for maintaining confidence in my ability to succeed despite the odds.

Thanks to Karen Taylor, Sacha Serville and my classmates at Von Steuben High School for supporting me and celebrating with me.

While being inducted into the Alumni Leadership Academy *is* a high honor, by no means have I arrived. In fact, this is a milestone; a line drawn in the sand that reflects a lifelong journey to do the most good with what God gave me.

Many of my clients are in the music industry and there is a saying that you're only as good as your last hit record and if that is true, then in business, you're only as good as your last documented success.

I accept this honor as a challenge to continue to demonstrate the highest standards of excellence expected of a CoBA graduate; to do more of what I'm doing, better than how I've done it, for the benefit of others and without *any* regrets.

Thanks!

Isha Edwards