

GRAMMY AWARD WINNING ICON, ROBERTA FLACK HELPS DISTRIBUTE THANKSGIVING MEALS FOR THE HOLIDAY AT JACOB'S SOUL FOOD RESTAURANT



Rashid Niang, Kim Lum Chan Niang,



Jacobs staff,



Roberta Flack, Rashid Niang

Lined up since 9:30 am, in eager anticipation of a free, Thanksgiving Day Hospitality Feast, hundreds of invited and uninvited guests strode across the red carpet entrance to Jacob's Soul Food and Salad Bar Restaurant, on Malcolm X Blvd. and 129th Street. Only a video recording could capture the delightful gratitude most diners expressed, after being told by the restaurant's staff to serve themselves any of Jacob's sumptuous 42 menu items.

The restaurant's owners, Rachid (Jacob) Niang and his wife, Kim Lum Chan Niang, meticulously planned this event as an exclusive occasion for the underserved and the community pillars who invited them. No business would be conducted, noted with the removed cash register. However the scheduled 1:00 pm closing time was delayed to 1:30 pm because Jacob's owners refused to deprive people who kept entering, dining or having their meals wrapped to go, until most food trays were emptied.

At 11:30 am, the awe-inspiring arrival of the lovely, charming, song-diva- pianist Roberta

Flack, Andre Smith, her long-time backup singer and Brabod, her pianist-vocalist, induced a mystical, historic fervor. She illuminated the backdrop of Jacob's Restaurant serene ambience and elegant Holiday tree and decor. Aside from those who quickly trailed or surrounded Roberta when she sat in Jacob's dining room, a crowded line of anxious fans ensued, following announcements that she would autograph her Roberta Flack Christmas Carols' CD, delivered as her gifts, for all guests.

While Andre, also the popular "Open Mic" host at Ashford & Simpson's Sugar Bar Restaurant in Manhattan, and Brabod performed renditions of Roberta's Christmas Carols, the room was abuzzed with people wondering, "what made it possible for Roberta Flack to appear at Jacob's?" Irma Tyus-Mitchell of the Harlem News Group and Black Noir Magazine, assisted Ms. Flack's entourage and other guests.

Though Jacob's owners were told not to expect a heavy turnout, many notables among the attendees also defied traditional myths that few peo-

ple eat Thanksgiving meals before afternoon or would enjoy a gratis morning Thanksgiving meal in a restaurant. These included Antonia Badon, the commercial acting coach and celebrated actress of her raved-reviewed, Zora Neal Hurston play; Mary Dowery, retired Professor and NYC Dept. of Education clinical consultant; Kevin Dunn, President of Puzzles For Us and 2007 Project Enterprise Winner; Francine Burbridge, MSW also representing NYC Park's Dept.'s Battered Women's Project's guests; Harlem's Verizon Technology Center's students; Clarice Dupree, widower of the late, Sahid Dupree, Harlem's renowned Jazz Coalition president-pianist, and Atlah Ministries organist; Francine Brown, assistant strategist for Craig Schley, last year's U.S. Congressional seat candidate; Irma Norris, playwright-producer and guests from Ralph Lauren-Sloan Kettering's Cancer Care Center, Harlem's Pilgrim Baptist Church and The Brothers Recovery Program.

"Although there was so much parade traffic in front of my building, causing quite a delay, I

really came here to help serve," announced, Ms. Flack, who's world renowned, classic, 1970's "Killing Me Softly," plays frequently on R&B, pop and jazz radio stations. Meanwhile, people kept bombarding her.

By the time their doors opened, on Thanksgiving Day, Mr. Niang's spontaneous, "open-door policy," seemed spiritually motivated. His insurmountable compassion was evident, as several guests expressed unabashed intrigue and gratification for the owners. Remarks were made regarding the expensive cost, and sacrifices made to host such an event.

Added to their thriving dining business, here lies a husband and wife, "living the American dream." Mr. Niang, a native of Senegal, and Mrs. Niang, a native of Trinidad & Tobago, who separately arrived in the U.S. about 15 years ago, are youthful, early 30's, brilliant, hard-working parents who recently celebrated the birth of their first child--a three months old' baby girl!!

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