



MELBA MOORE is shown at the Salaam Restaurant in a previous performance to a relaxed and pleased audience.

(Photo by Khalid T. Ali)

## The Salaam re-opens

By Rhena M. Muhammad

CHICAGO — Amid growing speculation from observers, the Nation of Islam is "going for broke" as it quietly dismantles and rearranges many of its business enterprises.

Since the ascension of Wallace D. Muhammad to the Nation's highest post—that of Chief Minister—many changes have taken place in the Nation: some that are very obvious to outsiders, and some that are not so obvious.

Perhaps none are quite as striking as the Nation's rechanneling of its business interests—the most visible sign of its policy of self-help and self-betterment.

One of the most famous of the Nation's business ventures, and a landmark to the Nation's commitment to its Believers and the general community is the Salaam Restaurant.

And like many of the other commercial holdings of the Nation of Islam, the Salaam is being buffeted by the winds of change.

### SUPERB EFFORT

"Salaam Restaurant had established a reputation in the past as being a place for good food and good service," said Nuri Madina, who along with his business associate Tiahmo Ra'uf will be attempting to bring Salaam back to, and even surpass, its former glory.

"The idea of the Honorable Messenger Elijah Muhammad," he continued, "was to establish a place on the South Side where Bilalians could go and receive top-quality service. At the time of Salaam's beginning, there was a scarcity of places like this for Bilalians."

Scheduled to reopen next month under the guidance of

Madina and Ra'uf, the New Salaam will seek to "incorporate the Messenger's concept of a decent dining place for Bilalians along with the concept of the Chief Minister's of providing a cultural center for Bilalians."

"We want to combine these

**"One of the most famous of the Nation's business ventures and a landmark to the Nation's commitment to its Believers and the general community is the Salaam Restaurant."**

two ideas and come up with what we call the New Salaam Restaurant and Cultural Center," stated Madina. Many of the Nation's

have merely been given the approval to manage the building," explained Madina.

And manage it they will, if things go as Madina and Ra'uf envision them: Salaam will not only be a place to dine and relax in a comfortable atmosphere, it will also be a

place for cultural enrichment. "We will feature actors, writers, sports figures, and business and community leaders—many of the people

graduate of Columbia University, is versed in advertising, promotions, and public relations, while Ra'uf brings years of service at the Old Salaam Restaurant to enhance the managerial partnership.

"Brother Ra'uf had worked at Salaam, and he has several years of experience in the food service business," says Madina. I was a steady patron there, so that we were able to view Salaam from both the positive and negative sides."

Opened as the Salaam Restaurant in 1968, the building had formerly housed the Chesterfield Bank. Located in a quiet residential area on the South Side, it was the pride of the Nation of Islam's

most black businesses," said Madina. "But some of the problems were peculiar to Salaam."

"The restrictiveness that was then necessary and widespread throughout the Nation's businesses isolated us from the community at that time. There were many people that were not made to feel welcome there—dress codes, a ban on interracial couples, smoking—these were some of the things that were taboo at the old Salaam."

Madina credits the community with giving him and Brother Ra'uf the incentive to revive the Salaam Restaurant. "Our working with the people in the community—this being where our inspiration comes from—gave us the desire to reopen the Salaam."

"The fact that Salaam is closed as a restaurant, and there was not a lot of cultural activities going on in the area, made the general community as sad about it as it did the Believers."

"Cottage Grove and 83rd Street is a prime corner in a very stable neighborhood, and to have a corner like that with nothing on it is indicative of the community," states Madina.

It is the people who live in the area along with their fellow Muslims that Madina and Ra'uf believe will make the New Salaam a success. "I think that we can depend on a phenomenal response from the community because I think they recognize that this is something that will benefit them, too."

Salaam will be open for business seven days a week, and will serve breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Local and regional talent will also be featured, with the weekends devoted to major acts from across the country.



IRONING OUT details of the new operation are the Nation of Islam Organization President Dr. Abdul Salaam, and newly appointed operators of the Salaam, Nuri Madina and Tiahmo Ra'uf.

(Photo by Donald Akbar)

businesses are totally up for sale, but some, like Salaam Restaurant, are merely looking for new management. "It was the Nation's desire to keep Salaam as the Nation's property. My partner and I

that have a cultural impact on the everyday lives of Bilalians."

Nuri Madina and Tiahmo Ra'uf are not strangers to the entertainment and restaurant businesses. Madina, a recent

followers, both in and out of Chicago.

But the Salaam was beset with problems almost from the start. "Part of the problem at Salaam was, I think, indicative of the problems that afflict