**CENTENNIAL SPOTLIGHT: MOHAMMED LAWAL:  AMERICAN DREAM PERSONIFIED AT GRAND CENTRAL OYSTER BAR**

The story of Mohammed Lawal is a true tale of the American Dream. So, it is with good reason that his smile is as big as the Grand Central Oyster Bar's main dining room, and that's big indeed, a 250-seater visited by tourists and natives alike for a century.

As the Oyster Bar celebrates its 100th Birthday, Lawal's ear-to-ear grin has grown ever larger. Twenty-two years at the landmark restaurant in Grand Central Terminal after arriving from his homeland in Ghana in 1990 will foster that.

“The most important thing is the opportunity here in America,” reflects the restaurant’s vice president.  “I started as a dishwasher when I first arrived, and I worked hard. It's what the Big Apple is all about.  I'm seeing it, it's a reality.”

It’s the only place he’s ever worked in the U.S.A.

Lawal, 50, indeed loves going to work on the Metro North from Yonkers, after moving north from his adopted hometown of the Bronx, arriving in early morn into the hustle and bustle of Dashing Dans and Damsels.

“My favorite about the restaurant is the atmosphere,” says Mo.  “It's a great working environment.  Of course, the nature of the business – always being busy here – makes it stable.  And stability is important, it's good for you.”

His two favorite seafood catches are salmon and ocean trout.

A huge boxing enthusiast, it’s somewhat ironic that he bears the same name as the greatest heavyweight of all time -Mohammed Ali - and that a current fighter shares his exact name -- light heavyweight and mixed martial artist MoLawal.

“My all-time favorite is Mike Tyson,” says the fan of the Sweet Science. “Then came Riddick Bowe, and Lennox Lewis.  I've always been a fan of the heavyweights.  Azumah Nelson got me into the fights in the lower divisions. But it seems like these days all of them have vanished.  Before, they would fight anyone. Now, it seems that the good fighters don't like to fight anybody.”

Mo and his wife Mariam have four children: Sadat, 11, Salamatu, 9,  Mahmoud, 5, and recent addition, Amirah,  2 ½ months.

Mohammed Lawal is a heavyweight in his own right.