

Caribbean Life

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'Women Build' paints church hall

By Tequila Minsky

The Grace Episcopal Church in Jamaica, Queens dates from 1702 and its present building on Jamaica Ave. —the third structure—was consecrated on January 8, 1863. It is the second oldest Episcopal Church in New York City and the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission designated the church and the graveyard as a historic site in 1967.

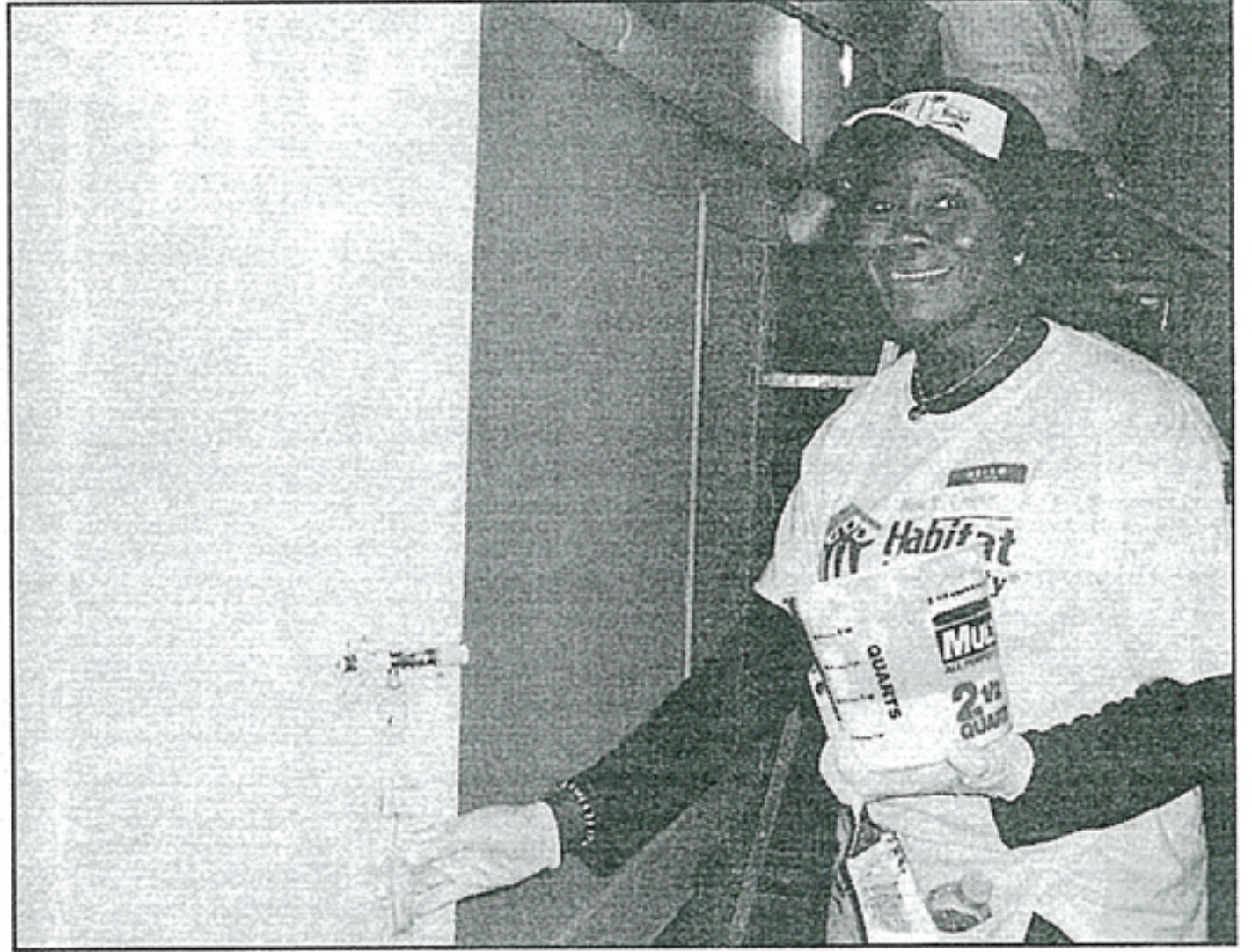
It is at these long and well-used facilities where 20 women painted and celebrated Mother's Day with Habitat for Humanity- NYC. Reinvigorating the 100+ year-old fellowship hall with fresh coats of sky blue, ochre, and lemony yellow paint, volunteers from all walks of life worked alongside future Habitat- NYC homeowner moms.

The Mother's Day "Women Build" is an annual Habitat- NYC event and this was the second year Christina Rivera volunteered. "Knowing I'll be helping improve a community brings joy into my heart," she said.

Adding, "I believe the children are our future, and what we do in this community can be a great step to better things for the children in all communities. One small step can make a huge difference in someone's life. I'm so glad to be a part of this experience."



Six-year-old Ella Collins is pretty independent of her mother (nearby) both painting volunteers at the Grace Episcopal Church fellowship hall at the Mother's Day Habitat- NYC project. At right: Future Habitat- NYC homeowner mom Olayinka Balogun, currently shares her one-bedroom apartment with her niece and grandniece. She contributed "sweat equity" hours by painting, which will help offset the cost of her future affordable Habitat- NYC condominium in Brooklyn.



Photos by Tequila Minsky

Christina and other volunteers also helped raise funds that will be invested in building more Habitat- NYC homes for families in need.

Other volunteers included women from the non-profit Nontraditional Employment for Women (an electrician and an ornamental iron worker), a mother and her six-year-old daughter, and two teens who celebrated Mother's Day as part of their high

school community service requirement.

Five future Habitat- NYC homeowner moms also joined in the effort to spruce up the center. Among them was Olayinka Balogun, who currently shares her one-bedroom apartment with her niece and grandniece. She was contributing "sweat equity"

hours, which will help offset the cost of her future affordable Habitat- NYC condominium in Brooklyn.

In recent years, Grace Episcopal Church has expanded its programming. Its soup kitchen feeds 150 homeless men, women and families. The church hosts Al-Anon, runs a youth program and summer

camp, and is partnering with other organizations to expand its community services especially youth-serving programs.

Habitat- NYC plans for more projects to refresh program facilities, which will help the church as it expands its women services.

The annual Women Build

celebrates the Mother's Day holiday and recognizes the struggles of mothers everywhere.

Habitat- NYC has built more than 220 affordable homes in the five boroughs of New York City with the help of volunteers. It transforms lives and the city by building quality homes for families in need.