

NYCHA DGM DEIDRA GILLIARD
HABITAT FOR HUMANITY'S MLK BUILD WEEKEND
SUNDAY, JANUARY 16, 2011 – 2:00 PM
PS 54, NEAR NOSTRAND AVENUE AND WILLOUGBY STREET, BROOKLYN, NY

Good afternoon, ladies and gentleman; and thank you for the opportunity to join you on this very special occasion. It is a pleasure and an honor to be with you as we celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and commend the necessary and noble work Habitat for Humanity and, indeed, all of us who strive to follow Dr. King's example as champions for social and economic justice must do.

I believe that far too often we remember Dr. King only as a civil rights leader and forget his long struggle for essential economic fairness and the right of all people—regardless of race, gender or circumstance of birth—to take full opportunity of the American Dream. For you see, social and economic justice are, in Dr. King's words, "bound together."

Habitat for Humanity knows this. And it's just one of the many reasons the New York City Housing Authority is not only fortunate, but also proud to partner with Habitat as we work

together to foster the vibrant public and affordable housing communities that every New Yorker so richly deserves.

Just this past Tuesday, NYCHA and Habitat came together to launch the Brush with Kindness initiative at the Lafayette Gardens Community Center. Beginning this past Thursday and lasting through the King Holiday weekend, NYCHA residents and Habitat volunteers are coming together to paint the Lafayette community center and Resident Association meeting room. And Lafayette is only the first of 16 NYCHA community centers Habitat will help revitalize.

Brush with Kindness forms one phase of our three-part and long-term partnership to improve NYCHA community spaces, educate and prepare 100 NYCHA residents to become home owners and support Habitat for Humanity International's on-going rebuilding efforts on the ground in Haiti.

NYCHA Chairman John Rhea believes deeply what Dr. King preached: "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" That vision guides NYCHA's

partnerships with community stakeholders and elected leaders alike, because our effort to create healthy communities begins with an unwavering focus on the needs of NYCHA families.

NYCHA is committed, now more than ever, to engage and empower our residents, strengthen existing relationships and forge new coalitions with partners who believe as we do that safe, secure and vibrant public and affordable housing communities are essential to the prosperity of all New York.

Dr. King once said, “Even if I knew that tomorrow the world would go to pieces, I would still plant my apple tree.” When I look around this auditorium and see the beautiful faces of so many children I know what Dr. King meant. Let us dedicate ourselves to continue the journey Dr. King and our parents and grandparents began years ago. Let us continue to work for a world worthy of our children. And let each of us, through service, plant our apple tree.

Thank you very much.