

# Not Normal

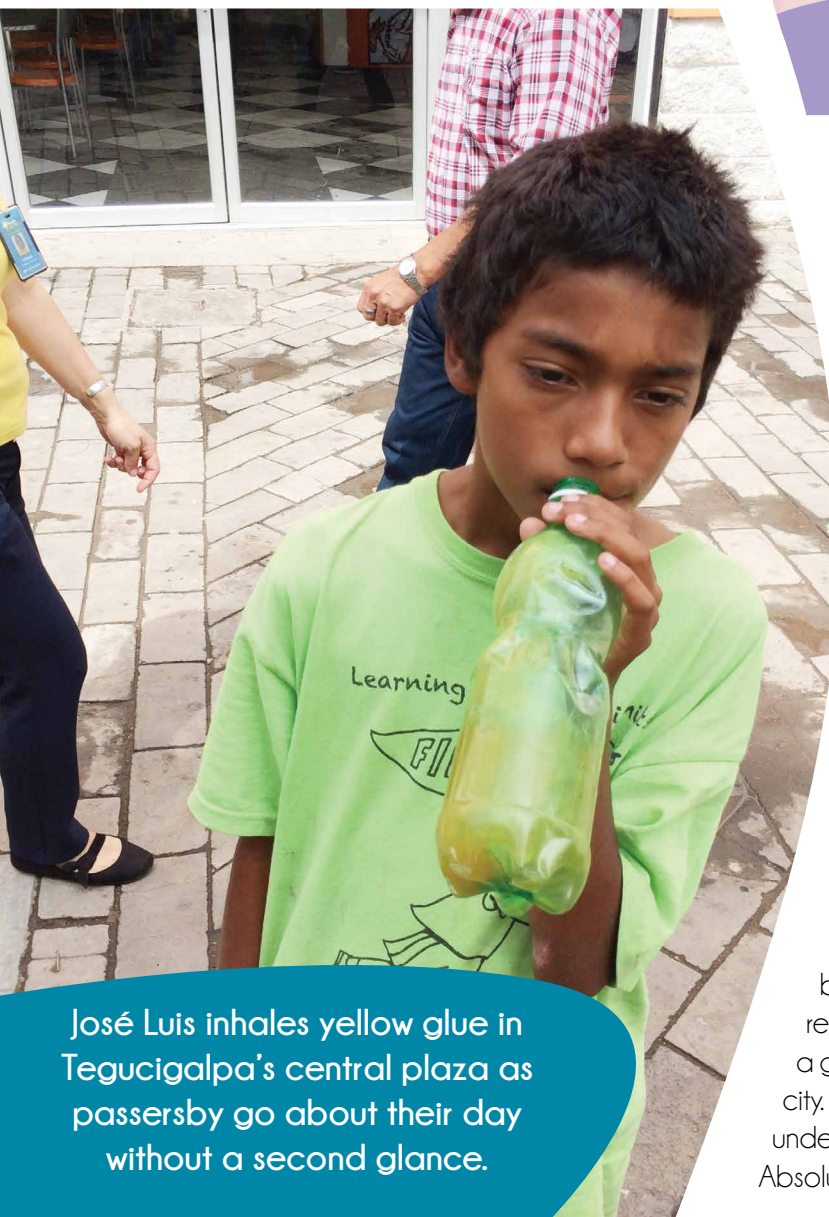
## The Micah Project December 2015

“You are all children of the light and children of the day. We do not belong to the night or to the darkness...” | Thessalonians 5:5

“Michael, will you buy us a bag of marbles? They only cost five lempiras (25 US cents) and we want to play!” This question was posed to me by a ragged ten-year-old named Elvin who had been sleeping with a group of eight or ten other street kids in the central plaza of Tegucigalpa. I had just sat down underneath a tree where this group of kids hangs out day-after-day. Most of them were well into their first bottle of yellow glue; their eyes were unfocused and their words slurred as they greeted us.



Elvin and José Luis are thrilled to get some attention from Heather and Jessica



José Luis inhales yellow glue in Tegucigalpa's central plaza as passersby go about their day without a second glance.

Bounded by a 250-year-old cathedral on one side and city hall on another, the central plaza is the heart of this colonial city. It is usually a bustling and happy place: on any given day there is a music group in the bandstand to promote some cause, a street preacher off to one side urging the masses to repent and a clown or two selling balloons and making kids smile. Thousands of people flow through the plaza every day walking to distinct destinations.

Sitting there cross-legged with my back propped up against the tree, chatting with Elvin and the other kids, I realized that I was seeing the central plaza from their perspective. Life moved briskly by in every direction while these boys seemed to have gotten stuck here in this place. Only a few people even glanced in our direction as they made their way through the square. The little boys sucking on the fumes of yellow glue should have stood out as a tragic anomaly in this place, but as I sat there with them, I realized that they were just a part of the scenery—a normal part of the day for the people passing by.

Elvin's innocent request for marbles was incredibly jarring to me. It reminded me of what these kids should be doing—they should be on a school playground running and laughing at recess. It reminded me how completely NOT NORMAL it was to be sitting with a group of homeless and forgotten boys in the most public part of our city. Little children should not be huddled in ragged clothes, asleep under a park bench! There is something terribly wrong with this scene. Absolutely nothing about it is normal.



Recently, a friend of ours brought that point home to us. Mauricio Palacio, a Mexican artist and missionary, spent a week at the Micah Project working with our boys. One evening, as we worshipped and prayed and the boys shared their testimonies, Mauricio painted a piece that symbolized the ministry of the Micah Project. As I looked at his marvelous painting afterwards, I realized that the figure representing the street child also represented death—spiritual, emotional and even physical death. And that is exactly what it means to be a child on the street. We can talk about how resilient they are and how amazing it is that they can survive on the streets, but, sooner or later, street life ends in death—some form of it, anyway.

But Mauricio's painting does not focus on the boy laying on the ground; rather, the central image of the painting is a figure bursting out of that prostrate child, the chains around his wrists shattering in the process. The new figure is bathed in light, so much so that the child below him almost disappears in the shadows.

It is that freedom – the glorious freedom of the children of God – that is at the very heart of the Micah Project. Not one of these boys was born with a foreordained destiny to die on the streets; it was not the plan of their Heavenly Father who is the giver of all good gifts. For sixteen years, the Micah Project has ministered to the street kids of this city in order to convince them that He wants SO much more for them than a bottle of yellow glue and a dirty corner of the central plaza.



Axelito on the streets in 2010



Becca spends time with Axelito and Obed shortly after first meeting them in 2007

Several years ago, we got to know another boy in this very spot in the central plaza, an eleven-year-old street kid named Axelito. He is a second-generation street kid, and the only picture he has of his mom is from a newspaper clipping reporting her murder on the streets when she was nineteen years old and he was just a toddler. In every way, he grew up thinking that the streets were his home; they were the only "normal" that he ever knew.

But Axelito was not destined to die on the streets. He spent the night in a real home for the first time in his life when he joined the Micah Project in March of 2010. He gave his life to the Lord and was baptized in October of that same year. The Lord began a new work in his life, using the desperation and solitude of his childhood to form a young man with a compassionate heart towards others. Now, at seventeen, he is a leader here at the Micah House.

Last week, Axelito finished writing and recording a song that he had worked very hard on. One of the verses goes like this:

¿Quién me toca si estoy sobre la roca?  
 Nadie a mi me bota, aunque me provoca  
 ¿Dime quien me toca si estoy sobre la roca?  
 En Cristo soy mas que vencedor...  
 Un luchador soy... para adelante voy...  
 Guiados por sus pasos, con mi frente en alto  
 Yo nunca me rindo, en esto me distingo...

Who can touch me if I am on the rock?  
 No one can throw me down, even if they try to provoke me.  
 Tell me, who can touch me if I am on the rock?  
 In Christ I am more than a conqueror...  
 I am a fighter... and I am moving forward.  
 Guided by his footsteps, with my head held high  
 I never give up, and that's what makes me different.









Five years later, Axelito is now one of our older guys pouring into the lives of the younger ones like Edward and Daniel

The light-infused figure in our painting—the one that is bursting into freedom? That is Axelito. He knows now that the little boy clutching the bottle of yellow glue is not normal—not what he was created for. That figure represents every boy that has entered into the Micah House and has claimed his inheritance as a child of the King. And I pray—fervently—that the freedom found in that figure would also be claimed by Elvin, the little boy in the central plaza sucking on his bottle of yellow glue and asking for five lempiras to buy some marbles.



Ismael, Axel, Jhon, Edward and Wilmer perform a song at this year's graduation



This year, we have had the great privilege of hosting many of you and taking you down into the central plaza to meet Elvin and the other boys. The first reaction to meeting the boys for the first time is “we have to do something to get them off the streets!” The entire Micah team here in Honduras is deeply grateful to you for doing just that—every time you give to the Micah Project, every time you pray for one of our boys, every time you share about this ministry with one of your friends. When you come alongside us, we are able to continue proclaiming to these boys that the degradation of street life does not have to be their “normal”—and that the shining freedom brought about by Christ can be theirs.

Thank you for being freedom fighters on behalf of the street boys of Honduras.

Su hermano en Cristo,  
*Michael Miller*

