

Sometimes You Just Can't Say No

The Micah Project Summer 2010 Letter

"Please let me live here at the Micah House."

The miserable-looking street boy who spoke these words to us in early March was 12-year-old Miguel Angel. Sitting in our dining room by the front door of the Micah House, clutching his bottle of yellow glue, Miguel Angel looked to be on the verge of tears. He had come to the Micah House with Axel, a street boy his same age. Though they came from similar circumstances, Miguel Angel seemed more desperate than Axel; while the latter had an impishness of a boy who knows how to run the streets, Miguel Angel seemed to be a lost soul terrified by his plight.

The problem with Miguel Angel's plea to become a Micah boy was that we were full; in fact, in our ten-year history, we only rarely have a free bed. So on that first visit, we let Miguel Angel and Axel eat lunch with us and then ushered them out the door and back to the outdoor market where they would try to survive another day. But over the next couple of weeks, Miguel Angel kept coming back, sometimes with Axel and sometimes alone. His plea to us was always the same: *"I want to live at the Micah House."*

As a ministry surrounded by poverty and brokenness, we have to make hard choices every day. We have a stream of young men, from a variety of backgrounds and for a multitude of reasons, that show up at our door every week asking to be given a chance. But the urgency in Miguel Angel's plea was different. As he persisted over the following weeks, we were reminded of the gospel story of the four friends that tore open a roof in order to lower their paralytic friend to Jesus when the surrounding crowds prevented them from getting near. He saw their faith, forgave their sins and healed their friend. Miguel Angel was showing the same persistent faith as these four friends, and we just couldn't keep saying no. He moved into the Micah House on March 21 (and his little friend Axel moved in a few days later!).

The day he moved in, Miguel Angel brought his mom Kenia to the house so that she would know where he lived. This quiet and respectful 30-year-old lived in a condemned building in the market area that had been partially destroyed by Hurricane Mitch. She sold candy and cigarettes out of a little crate as she walked through the market area, trying to earn enough money to raise Miguel Angel and his teenage sister. When she came to visit the Micah Project, she thanked us again and again for helping to get her son off the streets.

In April, Kenia began to come to the Micah house a couple afternoons a week to join our Micah Moms' sewing ministry. Several times, though, she complained of severe stomach pains and had to leave early. By May, her pain had become so severe that she could barely walk. Our director of operations, Becca Bell, decided to take her to a hospital to get some tests. The results were shocking: advanced, inoperable cervical cancer.



Miguel Angel, left, smiles with his new friend Nelson

Kenia never left the hospital after that. Becca and some of the moms in our sewing ministry visited her almost daily, but her health grew steadily worse. Becca also took Miguel Angel with her several times, and he came to understand that his mom was dying. On June 15, she passed away after a few last agonizing days. Rebecca was able to take him to the hospital the day before, and he knew enough to say good-bye.

The days since his mom's death have been sad ones for this little boy. We have stayed close by his side and have encouraged him to talk about his sudden loss. At the same time, we are awed by a heavenly Father who knew that his little son Miguel Angel would need a safe place to live, and would need it soon. When Miguel Angel came to the Micah House time-after-time and pled *"please take me in"*, it had to have been the Holy Spirit moving him to us. And even as several drunken relatives dug

his mom's grave and lowered the casket down, Miguel Angel clung to us at the graveside, safe in the knowledge that he would be protected and loved.

Taking Miguel Angel into a full Micah House turned out to be an important lesson for us as a ministry: even as we mature our systems and structures through a very healthy strategic planning process, it is important that we remain open to the movement of God's Spirit in the day-to-day decisions of our ministry. Sometimes, God moves us to say "yes" even when the policies of our ministries would have us say "no". That is humbling but also very exciting, as we have the opportunity to see His mighty hand at work before our eyes.



Miguel Angel arranges flowers on his mother's grave the day of her burial

As we enter our second decade of ministry, we feel that God is moving us into some new and very exciting directions...and we are trying our best to work up the courage to say "yes" to His guidance! The biggest "yes" that we've had to say in the last few months is our decision to begin to look for a new Micah House. Our current facility has growing deficiencies that distract us in the process of taking boys off the streets and transforming them into the men that God wants them to be. The first is the increase of drugs and crime in our neighborhood. Our concern is not as much about our safety as it is about the temptations for our boys to fall back into that lifestyle. Because of this, we have to restrict the time that our boys can be outside, which can make them feel trapped.

We would like to find a new facility that would have certain features that would promote success in our ministry. First and foremost would be some outdoor yard space, where they can kick a soccer ball around and burn off their boundless energy. It should also have a better kitchen, appropriate living space for group home parents, more storage, and a larger communal space for meetings and worship times. At the same time, we don't want it to be a compound; the house should still be in an urban or semi-urban environment, with neighbors that the boys can relate to. Ideally, it would be no more than a 15- or 20-minute drive from our current location, which we would continue to use for our educational program with the boys and our outreach ministries. Currently, we are looking at some property near the Villa Linda Miller neighborhood, about six miles from the current Micah House.

In the coming months, we ask that you pray extra-hard for the Micah Project! Pray that the decisions we make regarding the future of the project will be wise, thoughtful and God-inspired. And, as always, please continue to pray for our young men. Like Miguel Angel, most have faced a level of tragedy in their childhood that would seem almost impossible to overcome. But, they continue to say "si" to God on a daily basis, and He continues to bless them!

The week that Miguel Angel's mom died, we were hosting a missions team from Houston full of Micah friends. As they stayed close by Miguel Angel and supported us through such a difficult time, we were reminded of how important you all are to us. You lift the boys up with your prayers, your encouragement and love keep us going when daily ministry just seems too hard, and your continued financial support allows us to keep saying "yes" to the children like Miguel Angel who God brings in our path.

Su hermano en Cristo,

Michael Miller

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