

Amachi: What Might Your Sponsored Child Do?

by Amy L. Sherman

In 1998, Mayerly Sanchez, 14, was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. (See “Mayerly Slides” for pictures.) The Columbian teenager is the co-leader of a peace movement in her violence-torn country. In 1996, she lost her dear friend Milton when a gang active in Mayerly’s neighborhood in Bogotá stabbed him to death. The incident was not unusual. Columbia’s homicide rate is 15 times that of the U.S.’s rate. More than 30,000 people die violently there every year.

At Milton’s funeral, Mayerly and her friends vowed that they would try to do something to address the violence in their land. Within 24 months, they built of a movement of nearly 3 million child activists working to think and act for peace. The movement’s main accomplishment thus far has been to get over 10 million Columbian citizens to vote “yes” to a Citizen’s Mandate for Peace, Life, and Freedom. The student activists lead marches to raise awareness for peace, lobby Columbian congressmen to pass better legislation, host conferences at universities, and work at the neighborhood level to teach and practice nonviolent conflict resolution.

Mayerly is an amazing young woman. And she is a sponsored child.

Americans who sponsor children through Food for the Hungry may be motivated—at least initially—by the youth’s need. After all, these youth come from impoverished backgrounds and they need the support, schooling, and material aid provided by their sponsors. But Mayerly’s story reminds us of an important lesson. God has a destiny for these children. We must not view them merely as recipients, but as future contributors—young people that God may use in very powerful ways despite their humble background.

The West African people have a word in their language that well-expresses this idea. It’s the word “amachi.” It means: “Who knows but what God has brought us through this child?”

Who knows what the sponsored child you support and pray for will become. Will she be a peace activist like Mayerly? Will he invent a breakthrough technology for assisting farmers or find the cure for cancer? Only God knows. What is certain, though, is that much potential talent will be lost if investments in these children are not made.

You will make a difference in the life of the child you sponsor. And that child may end up making a big difference in this hurting world.