

Introduction

Alejandra Robelo, Nicaragua and Maria del Rosario Franco Gallegos, Mexico graduated from the 31st AMI Primary Training Course held in Perugia, Italy from September, 1997 to May, 1998. The experience of these two students clearly exemplifies the metamorphosis which students undergo during their training and gives an indication of the growth and development experienced by students on AMI courses.

A New Vision



A few months ago we arrived in Perugia—from all corners of the world—from Japan, Mexico, Korea, the United States of America, Greece, Finland, Taiwan, Croatia, Guatemala, Nicaragua and various regions of Italy. On arrival, we felt distant and foreign in customs, religion and language, but united by the same motivation. In spite of our differences, we were searching for an answer to the same question: Who is the child?

Before our eyes, ignorant and blind, the child was a passive and useless being, poor and undefended, at the adult's mercy, he whom we must protect, serve, judge, correct and teach!

We tried to sweep away the cobwebs from our eyes and with our souls' eyes we tried to discover in these children, who spoke to us in a strange language, the true essence of man.

We tried to renounce the tyranny and to discover the fresh and true energy that inhabits the hidden regions of the child's soul.

We tried to give life to Maria Montessori's words when she said—in the spirit of Wordsworth—that the child is the “father of man” and that, in the humility of his silence, the construction of a new being is realised.

We have tried to reach the discovery of the child.

Today, after nine months of intense reflection and of living together, discovering, respecting and trusting each other, we feel

like sisters. Thus, beyond words, we are united by our souls.

Today we are united by the hope of discovering in every child the true human essence. We are united by the responsibility of defending all children, of fulfilling the recognition of their true nature, the social proclamation of their rights and the realisation of their necessities.

Today we feel a profound respect and a profound admiration for the child's soul, for the Asian child with almond eyes who from “nothing comes to existence”, for the European child with pale skin and straight hair who has “potential” and gradually forms himself from his own effort.

We feel a profound respect for the bare-foot, smiling child of Latin America who is a “spiritual embryo, an absorbent mind, an intellect of love”, for the child of the world who is a “master, a prophet, the project of humanity”.

Today we are no longer blind, but we see with half-opened eyes. The path towards the true spirit of the child and the profound secrets of the child's soul has barely started.

Hopefully, each one of us can say some day “I have helped a life to realise its creation. I have helped a child to act, to ask and think for himself. I have helped him to find a path that will bring him to reach his spiritual fulfilment”. Hopefully, with our words, our silence, our love and our actions, we shall

help the development of the immense potentiality of which the child, the father of man, is endowed.

I would like to finish with these words of Maria Montessori: "Tocar al niño es tocar el punto más sensible de un todo que tiene sus raíces en el pasado más remoto y que se dirige hacia el infinito del porvenir. Tocar al niño, es tocar el punto más delicado y vital donde todo puede decirse y renovarse, donde todo está lleno de vida, donde se hallan encerrados los secretos del alma, porque allí se elabora la educación del hombre" "Anything affecting the child affects the most sensitive point of a humanity which has its roots in the most remote past and is directed toward the infinity of the future. Anything that affects the child affects the most delicate and vital point, where all is filled with life, where the secrets of the soul are confined, for there the education of the adult is wrought." (Preface, *EL NINO, El Secreto De La Infancia* [The Secret of Childhood], Araluce, Barcelona, 1937.)

Alejandra Robelo
Nicaragua

When I arrived nine months ago, I came with the idea to learn a new "method", i.e. the Montessori method. I knew it was something new which would give me new knowledge to add to that already acquired when I was studying to become a kindergarten teacher.

I began to hear about "sensitive periods", the child's "absorbent mind", the child forming the man. All this was new to me. I started to feel uneasy with myself, with being unprepared to work with the children, with having wasted the best years of those children who had happened to come under my care.

Those little children who were familiar to me all at once became strangers—I who had treated them like toys without listening to their cries for independence; I who had felt proud in thinking it was I who taught them to read without understanding that they learn by themselves.

This awareness has shaken my previous attitude and convinced me to make a new start.

Now I will prepare an environment. I will prepare for: "...the child who explores, searches, works with delight because he is forming the man, the child who is building the future, a future of peace".

I hope that with my contribution, which is just a grain of sand, together with the help of the children, we will form a new world.

Maria del Rosario Franco Gallegos
Mexico