

## Candela Magazine, August-September 2004

### Our People: The Children of the Alliance

By Frances Colon

The Alliance Children are “Our People” of the month. They have been born in Boston’s *corazones* and are here to stay. Frances Colon talks with the Boston Hispanic children featured in the essay collection “Born in Our Hearts.”

*Logan International Airport in Boston was crowded. I lay sleeping in my father's arms, wearing my new, soft, purple overalls and sucking on my perfectly curved left index finger. I don't remember when I started doing this, or when I stopped, but occasionally, I bend my finger and stick it into my mouth to see how it feels, to see if it will give me any comfort—as if I knew the secret power my finger possessed back in Colombia when I was a child...***Marisa Catalina Casey, co-author, Born in Our Hearts**

**FOR MANY YEARS, THE IDEA OF BOSTON AS A** melting pot was not an easy task; communities were segregated and the racial divide could be felt just blocks away. Today, Boston opens its doors warmly to the world and in particular to Latinos that migrate to Beantown each year in record numbers as students, young professionals and working class families looking for *una vida major*. Another less-known group of Latinos has also been making its way to our New England shores: a group of tiny tots that have been born in the hearts of amazing families in our community. These children are the adopted Hispanic children of the Alliance for Children Foundation, whose stories of adoption joys have been depicted in the recently released essay collection, *Born in Our Hearts*.

Luis Fernando Scott, now 16 months old, was adopted by Jonathan Scott from Jamaica Plain. Today Luis is part of the vibrant Jamaica Plain community.

“It is important that my son’s birth land is a part of his life, so I brought back Ecuadorian flags, books, rugs from the market and toys for him. I want the things in our home to reflect who he is, to show him the complete picture,” says Scott about his son in a recent phone interview.

Five year-old Mila and four year old James, also from Ecuador, were adopted by Joel Barrera and his family in Natick.

“I’ve learned Ecuadorian recipes so that I can make them for Mila and James and we go on picnics with other families that have also adopted Ecuadorian children, we all stay in touch and help each other as much as we can,” says Mexican-American Barrera, who adds that even though his kids have soaked up the English language, the family goes the extra mile to instill pride in their cultural roots. They are planning a trip to South American in the next 2 years.

Sara Cooper, from Bogotá, was adopted by Howard Cooper and his family. Now at two and a half she calls Concord her new *casa*. Papá Cooper tells Candela how he always felt the full support of our community.

“Everyone has been enthusiastic; family, friends and colleagues. You can’t believe how many wonderful people gave us advice, in Colombia and here in Boston. Now everything that is in the news about Bogotá is very important to us, we’ve made a connection with the people there. They are special friends. Sara will always have that link and we are here to encourage her to explore it.”

For Alliance parents, Boston has been extraordinarily welcoming to their bi-racial families, taking them in and making them a part of the community. Scott remembers one particular night in JP when he felt Boston’s newfound diversity embrace his family.

“I was having dinner at Tacos El Charro one night, and I had Luis with me. There was a table of Latin women with children next to us and just as my food came, they took Luis Fernando and passed him around between them so I could eat. There was a recognition that he was one of their children.”

The Alliance for Children, the first international adoption agency in Massachusetts has placed approximately 5000 children in homes in the New England and Tri-State area in the last 28 years. Ten percent of those children are Latino. Founder Filis Casey started the agency as a lawyer who saw the pains and frustration of families undergoing the complicated process of international adoption. Eight years later, Filis and her own family were adopting Marisa Catalina from Bogotá, Colombia at the age of three. Her exciting story can be found in the prologue to *Born in Our Hearts*.

Since 2000, The Alliance has expanded to a foundation that helps children thrive and build successful lives as adults with or beyond the orphanage setting. Through the years, it has provided crucial medical treatment to orphans living in the Children’s Rehabilitation and Adoption Center (CRAN) in Bogotá, Colombia as well as aided nurseries that specialize in individualized care in Quito, Guayaquil and Cuenca in Ecuador.

In a creative effort to raise funds for this organization and share with all of us the truths about parenting from the heart, Filis and her daughter Marisa, now 24, collected the stories of over 50 international adoptions. Each speaks of first-meeting jitters, new brothers and sisters, loving communities and the constant search for cultural *raíces* in a book titled *Born in Our Hearts*. The sales proceeds will provide improved bathrooms, classrooms, libraries, safer playgrounds, better living spaces and clothing to orphan children in Latin America and around the world.

The Alliance Children are “Our People” of the month. They have been born in Boston’s *corazones y han llegado para quedarse. Bienvenidos chicos y que vengan muchos mas!*

*Born in Our Hearts* may be purchased at [amazon.com](http://amazon.com), 1-800-441-4459 or [www.hcibooks.com](http://www.hcibooks.com).

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