

Dear friends,

I write to you this morning with very bad news. I just got off the phone with our partners in La Oroya, and they (as the local news is now sharing, too) informed me that La Oroya is now under a state of emergency and no one is allowed to leave their homes. School has been cancelled, stores are closed, and there is no activity.

The reasons for this are long and complicated. In short, the workers union at the Doe Run Plant have taken over the streets. In response, over 2000 police and military have descended upon the town to control it. The politics are quite complicated: the plant has been contaminating the town for over a decade and making millions of dollars in the process; however, a year ago it shut down the plant temporarily, saying that it was going bankrupt. This was an excuse to avoid implementing a mandated environmental clean-up. Since then, the plant has been trying to make the government lessen the environmental standards and release them of any responsibility to clean up the town. In the meantime, the workers' unions are most concerned about their jobs (not the health of the kids nor the environment). So, today, in an effort to force the plant to start operations again (and start contaminating again) the workers' have taken over the streets.

In all of this, the voice of the kids' is what has been lost. No one is hearing their story. That's what our campaign is about. That is why the kids of La Oroya so desperately want to talk with you. As it stands, they are confined to their homes for the foreseeable future, likely until the end of the week (maybe longer).

Tomorrow would have been a tremendous opportunity for the kids of La Oroya (CAMBIALO) to share their story with you. Sadly, because of the actions of others, once again their voice is being silenced.

I am so very sorry that our skype call will not happen after all. It is not because the kids do not want to talk with you. In fact, nothing could be more important than talking with you -- it's at the heart of our campaign.

We know that this is your last week of school. Please know that we will continue trying to get our story out over the summer months. We hope that there will be another opportunity to share our story with you in the future.

In the meantime, we encourage you to watch ABC-NY this Saturday at 7:30 p.m. for the Above and Beyond awards in order to see what another one of our partner schools in NY is doing to help share our story. We would love to have such a relationship with you in the future.

Again, I am so very sorry. Your patience all this time has been tremendous and a true testimony to the goodness of others. We're grateful that you have tried to connect with us. Your mere willingness to hear the stories of the kids of La Oroya inspires us and motivates us to keep trying to get the story out.

So very sorry,
Jed Koball