



MINUTE FOR MISSION

April 15, 2006

A Courageous Woman

A courageous woman from La Oroya's Catholic parish made a hard decision one afternoon in February. Yolanda consented to be interviewed by a national television station in support of enforcing clean air standards for Doe Run Peru, a metallurgical firm. Doe Run Peru supporters had organized a strike to pressure the government to permit the company to postpone its compliance with clean air standards for four more years. Someone from a national television station called the Joining Hands Against Hunger-Peru office and asked to interview a person who was against the strike. After a great deal of discussion, those present decided to ask Yolanda.



Emissions containing dangerous levels of lead flow from the Doe Run Peru smelter in La Oroya.

Yolanda is no fool. She knows that she lives in a company town. She knows that the same people who were organizing the strike have called her a traitor and threatened drastic measures against all who oppose the Doe Run compliance extension. Yolanda had expressed fear for her family and herself and she had every reason not to speak out. For years, folks in La Oroya have just bowed their heads and choked back their protest. And the smelter has continued to churn out more than one thousand tons of toxic emissions every day.

Perhaps silence was the more prudent course for Yolanda.

But Yolanda chose to speak out. She described before a national television audience the fear and the threats, the lack of basic freedom of expression, her concern for a town full of lead-poisoned children. When the interview was over,



MINUTE FOR MISSION

April 15, 2006

A Courageous Woman

A courageous woman from La Oroya's Catholic parish made a hard decision one afternoon in February. Yolanda consented to be interviewed by a national television station in support of enforcing clean air standards for Doe Run Peru, a metallurgical firm. Doe Run Peru supporters had organized a strike to pressure the government to permit the company to postpone its compliance with clean air standards for four more years. Someone from a national television station called the Joining Hands Against Hunger-Peru office and asked to interview a person who was against the strike. After a great deal of discussion, those present decided to ask Yolanda.



Emissions containing dangerous levels of lead flow from the Doe Run Peru smelter in La Oroya.

Yolanda is no fool. She knows that she lives in a company town. She knows that the same people who were organizing the strike have called her a traitor and threatened drastic measures against all who oppose the Doe Run compliance extension. Yolanda had expressed fear for her family and herself and she had every reason not to speak out. For years, folks in La Oroya have just bowed their heads and choked back their protest. And the smelter has continued to churn out more than one thousand tons of toxic emissions every day.

Perhaps silence was the more prudent course for Yolanda.

But Yolanda chose to speak out. She described before a national television audience the fear and the threats, the lack of basic freedom of expression, her concern for a town full of lead-poisoned children. When the interview was over,

she was shaking, but those who accompanied her surrounded Yolanda and paused to thank God for the mustard seed of faith and the large dose of courage God had provided her in a critical moment.

The newspapers and television and radio program buzzed with the news: the organizers cancelled the strike. Four community leaders, inspired by Yolanda's decision, boarded a bus and traveled four hours down to Lima to meet with the press.

If people continue to speak out and all of us continue to pray and advocate, Dios mediante—God willing— there will be no violence in La Oroya in the coming months.

What can you do to add your voice to Yolanda's?

1. Pray for health, jobs and dignity in La Oroya: that people not be forced to choose between their children's health and their daily bread.
2. Send funds to La Oroya Childrens Fund, Designated Giving Account H0410006. Its purpose is to support Joining Hands-Peru Network activities to accompany local churches and organizations in La Oroya to reduce pollution and improve their quality of life. These activities include vitamin supplements and medical treatment for lead-poisoned children, pastoral care for them and their families, and advocacy to improve the community's environment without endangering jobs.
3. Send a note to alejandro@manosperu.org to register interest in receiving updates and calls for prayer and advocacy.

Ruth and Hunter Farrell
PC(USA) Mission Workers
Lima, Peru

she was shaking, but those who accompanied her surrounded Yolanda and paused to thank God for the mustard seed of faith and the large dose of courage God had provided her in a critical moment.

The newspapers and television and radio program buzzed with the news: the organizers cancelled the strike. Four community leaders, inspired by Yolanda's decision, boarded a bus and traveled four hours down to Lima to meet with the press.

If people continue to speak out and all of us continue to pray and advocate, Dios mediante—God willing— there will be no violence in La Oroya in the coming months.

What can you do to add your voice to Yolanda's?

1. Pray for health, jobs and dignity in La Oroya: that people not be forced to choose between their children's health and their daily bread.
2. Send funds to La Oroya Childrens Fund, Designated Giving Account H0410006. Its purpose is to support Joining Hands-Peru Network activities to accompany local churches and organizations in La Oroya to reduce pollution and improve their quality of life. These activities include vitamin supplements and medical treatment for lead-poisoned children, pastoral care for them and their families, and advocacy to improve the community's environment without endangering jobs.
3. Send a note to alejandro@manosperu.org to register interest in receiving updates and calls for prayer and advocacy.

Ruth and Hunter Farrell
PC(USA) Mission Workers
Lima, Peru

Do you have a mission story to tell? Would you like to read inspiring stories of Presbyterians in mission? Visit the Witness Season Web site: www.pcusa.org/witness. New minutes for mission are posted on the 1st and 15th of each month.

For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.

Do you have a mission story to tell? Would you like to read inspiring stories of Presbyterians in mission? Visit the Witness Season Web site: www.pcusa.org/witness. New minutes for mission are posted on the 1st and 15th of each month.

For more information on the Witness Season mission education emphasis contact Billie Healy, Associate for Mission Education Resources (888) 728-7228, ext. 5689, or Bhealy@ctr.pcusa.org.