

# Stopping the Trans-Pacific Partnership is a “Black Issue”

It's Not Culture but Capitalism

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*The Neoliberal assault on U.S. workers continues – this time with a slick move on the part of the 1% to sneak by the people a noxious trade bill called the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP). Far from being a lame-duck, the TPP is just one of measures the elite hopes to conclude using Barack Obama – their most effective weapon since Ronald Reagan for convincing the middle-class and working people to support policies that are objectively against their interests.*

Like the North American Free-trade Agreement (NAFTA) concluded under Bill Clinton that promised jobs, balanced economic growth and prosperity but instead created economic devastation in the agricultural sector of Mexico and the loss of jobs in the U.S., the TPP promises more of the same but on a grander scale.

If concluded, the TPP will continue the process of concentrating economic power in the hands of U.S. based transnational corporations and financial institutions. And while the 1% who have no allegiance to any national territory or state will grow richer, the agreement will pit workers in the U.S. — especially Black and Brown workers — into cut-throat competition with exploited workers, this time in Asia, who will be paid slave wages to produce for the U.S. and European markets – this agreement producing increased exports from the U.S. is a blatant lie.

That is why for African Americans as the group that objectively has suffered more than any other group domestically as a result of the turn toward neoliberal globalization in the 1970s and the economic crisis in 2008, we should reject all neoliberal proposals, be it in the form of Obama's phony urban “promise zones” to trade agreements. Opposition to neoliberal trade agreements, like broad opposition to neoliberal capitalism in general must be embraced as fundamental for our resistance movement and survival as a people.

However, our rejection of the TPP must not be based just on the negative consequence it will have on African American workers but on our movements' historic commitment to justice and solidarity with the oppressed and exploited, not only in the U.S. but throughout the world.

It is the principles of social justice, self-determination for peoples' and nations, authentic democracy and people-centered human rights that privileges dignity for the individual and the collective that must continue to inform our oppositional politics and vision for the future, and not loyalty to any individual.

Therefore, even though Barack Obama is now the front-man and making the case for Congress to give him “Fast-track” authority to conclude negotiations on TPP, our history and principles demand that we must stand in opposition.

### **The Propaganda Campaign Begins**

President Obama traveled to the Nike headquarters in Oregon over the weekend to argue why he should be given the authority to negotiate not only the TPP but also the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investor Partnership (TTIP).

The mechanism that the Obama Administration and the economic elites want to utilize is Fast-Track Promotion Authority (TPA).

TPA is the legislative mechanism used by the Executive branch of the Federal government to coordinate with the Federal Reserve to remove democratic control over monetary and trade policies. Created by President Nixon to circumvent the treaty-making authority that the U.S. Constitution vested with Congress, it is used as cover to pass trade deals that contain measures that Congress would have difficulty passing through normal processes because of the pro-corporate, anti-democratic and anti-working class provisions contained in them.

The agreement that President Obama and the bi-partisan elites want to finalize first is the TPP, a key element of his strategic “pivot to Asia” to counter the rise of China. The TPP is a secretive agreement being negotiated behind the backs of the people and even members of Congress who have been denied access to the full texts. It was only as a result of information from sources like WikiLeaks that members of the public were able to discover that the TPP was not just about trade but represented an anti-democratic coup that transferred economic and political power from the public in the U.S. and all of the countries involved in the agreement, to non-elected, and thus unaccountable elites in the U.S. who control transnational banks and corporations.

If concluded, the TPP will include the countries of Japan, Australia, New Zealand, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, Chile, Peru, Mexico and even Canada. It will become the largest trading bloc on the planet, comprising some 40 percent of the world’s economy.

With the revelations that the TPP would allow private corporations to sue governments for damages on future profits if governments enact laws to protect their citizens in areas like the environment, food safety regulations and labor protections and would allow U.S. transnationals to exploit the labor of those counties by paying workers a fraction of the wages to produce products for the U.S. market that they would otherwise have to pay workers in the U.S., there has been growing [opposition from groups](#) in the U.S. to stop Obama and the elites by stopping the authorization for Fast-tracking.

We African Americans should be asking questions such as: Why are Obama and the economic elite pushing another neoliberal trade agreement when the failure of neoliberal policies to provide sustainable economic development and security for our communities is so obvious? And if, according to President Obama, the agreement will benefit working people by generating jobs and improving economic conditions, why are the provisions secret and why can’t the representatives of the people in the U.S. Congress be privy to the details of the agreement and be able to examine, reject and/or alter the provisions, as needed?

## Stop Fast-Track in its Tracks

There is vote in the Senate this Tuesday where oppositional Democrats are lining up to defy Obama and the bi-partisan coalition representing the corporate and financial oligarchy. You can go to the following sites to get information on the strategy being developed to oppose the agreement and how you can join in beyond the vote on Tuesday.

<https://www.popularresistance.org/first-senate-vote-on-fast-track-for-tpp-on-tuesday/>

<http://www.flushthetpp.org/>

<http://www.citizen.org/tpp/>

## It's Not Culture but Capitalism

With the resistance fights from Ferguson to Baltimore and the intensifying repression being directed at our communities across the country, it is imperative that we understand how the conditions that we find our communities in today were the result of conscious policy decisions made by powerful interests outside of our communities.

Economic life that was always precarious for black people and the black working class specifically, devolved from a condition best described as a 35 year long recession to full blown depression level conditions with the crisis of 2008.

The reality of Baltimore and all of the urban areas where African Americans are located and experiencing severe economic and social deprivation cannot be understood without establishing the cause-effect relationship between those conditions and the internal logic of the capitalist system and processes like so-called free trade.

Deindustrialization and the flight of capital in the urban core cities where black people are concentrated in places like Detroit, Cleveland, Chicago, St. Louis, Milwaukee, Los Angeles, Oakland, and secondary cities like Flint, Michigan, South Bend and Gary, Indiana, and East St. Louis, Illinois to name just a few, tell the story of the capitalism's failure during its neoliberal phase to provide long-term quality employment for workers in general and black workers in particular.

As Barack Obama dutifully carries out his job as the spokesperson and protector of concentrated white power, we must demand that black elected officials represent the interests of the people and not the capitalist oligarchy that Hilary Clinton and Barack Obama represent.

The TPP is an assault on democracy, on the people, on commonsense and a future free of corporate economic domination and ecological destruction. It is an expression of U.S. imperialism, geared toward containing China and with its sister agreement, the TTAIP, Russia. The TPP is a weapon to maintain U.S. global hegemony by denying the fundamental economic, social and cultural rights of millions of people in order to benefit a parasitic white minority ruling class in the U.S. And for that fact alone, African Americans and all people of conscience should oppose it.

*\*The article title is taken from "The Trans-Pacific Partnership and the Political Economy of Black Opposition."*

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