

REPRINT of Article by Rev. Dr. William Barber II, president of the North Carolina State Conference of the NAACP and the National NAACP Chair of the Legislative Political Action Committee

WE NEED A VOICE:

Oppose 'Fast Track' for the TPP

Featured in The Hill February 27, 2015

For almost ten years now, the North Carolina NAACP has been building an anti-poverty, anti-racism, pro-labor moral people's movement. The strength of our movement is based on a simple truth--we provide a platform to give voice to thousands of working families who have been shut out of the corridors of power. We are gay, straight; old, and young; we are Black, White, and Latino; we are Muslims, Christians, Jews, Hindus, people with deep faith, and people of little faith but strong values about justice and treating people fairly. **We all believe we have a moral responsibility to speak out about policies that affect our families, our communities, and our opportunities. When we stand in solidarity with each other, our moral voices are loud as we speak truth to the money changers.**

Global trade issues may seem far-removed from our daily struggles. In North Carolina, however, we know that we lost tens of thousands of jobs because of past trade deals that were fast tracked through **Congress. Congress will soon take up "fast track" authority for the huge Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade deal. We say, Slow down. What's the fine print?** We have learned that when these trade deals get rushed through, working people get the short end of the stick. Here's about all we know about the TPP:

The TPP would be the largest trade pact in our history. It includes 12 nations; nearly 40 percent of the global economy. Despite its huge economic consequences, many of its details are secrets. The details that have been revealed go against many of the moral values we have been fighting for from international human rights to gay and lesbian rights to public health to environmental justice.

The TPP reminds us of the North American and the Central American Free Trade Agreements. Most of the victims of these deals have been poor, minorities, and other members of what used to be called the "working class." Despite sweet reassurances to the contrary, NAFTA and CAFTA threw thousands of N.C. textile workers out of work in the 1990s. When China joined the World Trade Organization in 2001, additional manufacturing jobs fled -- a trend that hit communities of color particularly hard in our state and beyond. The question of good jobs in minority communities is directly tied to the loss of these jobs overseas. Many have not ever been replaced. Many other jobs available are only at minimum wage.

NAFTA and CAFTA sucked tens of thousands of good jobs out of North Carolina and the south. At the same time, our Mexican and Central American friends tell us they were forced to move to the U.S. to feed their families because the low wages being paid by the runaway textile factories are not enough to live on. Wait until the TPP redirects textile and other manufacturing plants in Latin America to Asia. This will send more desperate parents across the Rio Grande, searching for jobs that pay enough to raise a family. While we join with our sisters and brothers from the south in our common fight for justice, human rights, and family unity, we also recognize that creating more forced migration makes little sense.

The issue now is to slow down the process of ratification. The people most affected--southern workers in particular -- need to have a chance to challenge the potentially transformative -- and damaging -- TPP. Hundreds of corporate lobbyists got access to the TPP negotiating texts. But ordinary working people have been excluded from the process. Even members of Congress are severely limited in their ability to review the deal's details; they can't even take their staff to review them.

Instead of opening up the troubling details of the TPP, corporate lobbyists are pushing for "fast track" authority in the coming weeks. Their aim is clear. Get Congress to give up its right to debate and improve the details and only vote to a simple "yes" or "no" on the whole trade deal.

There's a reason why nearly 600 national, state and local groups - including the national NAACP -- signed onto a letter opposing "fast track" last fall. **The people, particularly black, white, and Latino workers in**

North Carolina and across the south, need a voice in policies that affect our families. The TPP is no exception. We will go Forward Together, Not One Step Back. Congress should do the same. If the deal is as good as you say it is, show us the details.

"Fast tracking" the TPP is wrong for working families, for our southern states, and for our country.

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**-Rev. Dr. William Barber II, President
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COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS OF AMERICA

NO
Fast Track