



# PHP POST

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Race, Class and Power

## TPP: Concentration of Power for Investors and Inequality for Citizens

Conrado Oliveira, Executive Director, RED Uniendo Manos, Joining Hands Peru



Conrado Oliveira is interviewed outside of the Marriot in Lima where negotiators of the TPP were meeting in May 2013.

On October 5, 2015, after numerous rounds (and years) of negotiations, the public officials and advisors of the twelve countries representing more than a third of the global economy, finished negotiating the terms of the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) trade agreement. After being signed on February 4, 2016, it now awaits ratification by each of the corresponding parliaments of the 12 countries within a two-year time frame.

The TPP is considered to be the largest geopolitical pact ever, achieved through ambitious and multilateral commercial negotiations. Its promise is to stimulate the economic growth of the member countries by way of standardizing regulations through a long series of agreements among the governments of the participating countries.

Nonetheless, the average citizen is unaware

of the terms of these agreements due to the secrecy of the process, the lack of information sharing and the technical language used by the negotiators and specialists. The advisors and consultants for the negotiations represent big corporations, and there were no consultations with the population at large, nor with elected officials representing the population. Furthermore, the terms agreed upon cannot be modified by the respective parliaments of the 12 countries; they can only be ratified. So, will the TPP be as beneficial for common citizens, indigenous communities and local economies as it is for transnational corporations?

Among the 30 chapters of the TPP, the agreed upon terms go beyond the elimination of tariffs on commercial products and services to be traded. What

is at play are fundamental changes to the institutions of the countries involved, affecting ways of life and security of people because the agreement diminishes social, environmental and citizen rights for an indefinite period of time. For example the TPP:

- Elevates the protections of intellectual property rights in order to increase earnings for corporations that own the intellectual rights, at the cost of consumers.
- Places greater restrictions on labor rights (right to strike, unionize, collective bargaining, etc.)
- Increases the privatization of public services (health, education, water services, etc.) with greater benefits for

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## Letter From the Coordinator

By Ruth Farrell, Coordinator, Presbyterian Hunger Program

In some ways this PHP Post may be difficult to read. A first reaction to the articles might be that the views of these writers are one-sided. I want to share two experiences that make me stop, listen and consider.

I grew up working in a family business. I remember telling my family that I may have an MBA from the George Washington University, but most of the practical knowledge I have used over the years, I actually learned working for my dad. My dad's business brought value to his clients, created some jobs in our community, and kept money in our community. Shop local was always the mantra. We went to church, school and participated in other activities with our clients and others in the community and we knew, even though it wasn't stated, that the reputation of the business and the family were one and the same. "Do unto others" included our clients.

When I went to Peru and heard about a U.S. smelting company contaminating the city of La Oroya and the downstream and downwind valleys, I found it really difficult to believe that a business would knowingly adopt practices that would contaminate 11,000 children, their families, animals, the river and the air. I thought the U.S. government would immediately pressure the company to change its ways as it

was damaging the reputation of all U.S. businesses. Yet, I watched the company deny its contaminating practices until it was proven otherwise and then instead of changing those practices, they aggressively stated that it was within their legal right to

I found it really difficult to believe that a business would knowingly adopt practices that would contaminate 11,000 children, their families, animals, the river and the air.

break Peru's environmental standards and contaminate. In fact, they are suing the Peruvian government in a trade tribunal located in the U.S., claiming that their right to business profits trumps Peru's right to protect its people and environment under the U.S.-Peru Free Trade Agreement. It sounds absurd and yet Presbyterians have been following this for fifteen years and can only affirm that the absurd is true.

Of course, this wouldn't happen in the U.S. against "our own people"? And, yet Flint

may be the newest example of what can and is happening. In fact, the lead poisoning of children here eerily parallels what happened in La Oroya. Different situations, but in the name of profit, children permanently lose God-given intelligence. Business is not bad and can be the best way for folks to control their own destiny and get out of poverty. Yet, expecting government to be the sole balance to check their power is not working. Our partners push us to go deeper and suggest that this could not happen without deeply embedded racism in both business and government that defines "our own" in smaller and smaller circles.

It seems we live in a pivotal year in regards to important issues like elections, immigration, state violence, public education, and for-profit prisons and detention centers. It feels overwhelming, and yet going deeper into structural racism may be a platform that helps our church act with Biblical grounding on all of these issues. Self-reflection is the first step, and then building and strengthening relationships that are based on all people being "our own" is the second step. Read each article and think through what you can do to build and strengthen relationships in our congregations and communities that will replace structural racism with structures based on relationships that provide the checks and balances that embody the Gospel.

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# Environmental Racism and Justice

Reverend Leo Woodberry, Kingdom Living Temple, Woodberry & Associates

Environmental Justice is a clarion call against the manifestation of racism's application to people of color (POC) and communities that are disproportionately impacted by pollution. We see racism when it comes to where polluting facilities are sited, who receives financial resources, how policy is shaped, and who holds management and decision-making positions in environmental organizations.

It is a well-known fact that most sites that emit toxins or pollution or contain hazardous waste are far too often primarily located in people of color communities. In each and every case where environmental racist siting occurs, some governmental entity had to approve an ordinance of regulation or ruling in order for that industry or governmental entity to place elements that cause death, disease, and illness in people of color communities. In effect, much of governmental policy expresses environmental racism and injustice.

Industry bows too often to communities where people are educated, informed and organized, and where the principles of NIMBY (Not In My Backyard) are in full effect. In people of color communities, particularly low income communities, the sufficient knowledge that would allow people to make informed decisions and take adequate action to prevent environmental justice and racism in their communities is not as often present. Industry is aware of this situation and takes advantage of it. To paraphrase the words of the late Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., they're profit-oriented and not people-oriented. The ability to purchase property in poor communities at a cheaper rate and with less opposition is their primary motivation, and if the people in those communities happen to be people of color, they describe their covert and overt racism as sound business management practices.

Environmental racism and injustice even exist in the environmental movement. When we look at the racial disparity in mainline environmental organizations, we find very few people of color who are in executive and top management positions. A recent study by the University of Michigan showed that every organization, government, and non-profit had less than 30 percent of their POC employees in decision-making positions. The situation is even worse when it comes to the allocation of financial resources to make a difference in those frontline communities who suffer most because of environmental racism and injustice. Most funding is allocated to the so-called 'big greens,' regional and national networks that do little or no grassroots organizing in frontline communities. These big green networks are primarily managed and staffed by people who do not come from impacted communities. So the very people who call for, advocate, and endorse environmental justice and equity are indirectly the very practitioners of the opposite.

While it is an arduous struggle to change the unjust and racist practices of industry and governmental entities, we in the environmental movement can make changes more easily. We must make sure that leaders from communities most impacted by environmental pollution have a right to lead and determine the destiny of their own communities. Leadership of environmental organizations must be a reflection of the communities that are most impacted by environmental injustice. It also means that funding should flow to where the biggest problems are rooted. The world is suffering, but it has never suffered because we have been more inclusive. In fact, every time we have included more people,—regardless of race, nationality, gender, etc.—we have made more progress, become more democratic, and provided more justice for everyone.

## Spotlight

Andrew Kang Bartlett,  
Associate for National Hunger Concerns



Andrew Kang Bartlett is now the 'veteran' here in the Hunger Program. Thinking he would contribute for several months as an interim in 2001, Andrew relished the work so much he couldn't quit. His passion is in working with Presbyterians and partners locally and globally to strengthen local and regional food systems that reflect the love and justice demonstrated by Christ. Over the years, study and work have propelled him from Japan and Korea, where he lived for almost 5 years, to the Dominican Republic, Cuba, Mexico, Central America, Cameroon and South Africa. His favorite food is wild blueberry pie!

## » CELEBRATE

Congratulations to the 190 newly certified and recertified PC(USA) "Earth Care Congregations." We welcome over 20 new congregations to this program, and thank our many long-standing congregations who have participated since the beginning of this program in 2009. To learn more about the Earth Care program please visit [www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations](http://www.pcusa.org/earthcarecongregations).

# Injustice in the Food System: Labor and Inequality

Joann Lo, Co-Director, Food Chain Workers Alliance, PHP grant partner

Farm, fishery, food processing, meat packing, distribution, warehouse, grocery, and restaurant workers make up close to 20 million people working in the U.S. food system, making it the largest sector of employment. They join hundreds of millions more all around the world.

The food system has become increasingly globalized, with much of what we consume here in the United States produced overseas. International trade policies, consolidated corporate control, and increased industrialization of food production have converged to build a food system that relies heavily on exploited labor forces — from tea plantations in India, to banana plantations and packing operations in Guatemala, to cocoa farms in Ghana.

Historically, the food system was built on the backs of people of color and immigrants. In the colonial period, African slaves and indentured servants from Europe provided their free labor to produce food. After the Civil War, African-American sharecroppers in the South and Asian immigrants in the West became the low-paid workforce in the food system. Then in the latter part of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many aspects of food production were sustained by a labor force composed of recent Asian and Eastern European immigrants who were considered ethnically distinct from what was culturally defined as mainstream white America. Later, these same food-processing facilities hired African-American workers, often on a temporary basis as strikebreakers. In the middle of the 20th century, Mexican braceros were brought to the United States to work in the agricultural fields, a trend which continues in the present day with undocumented immigrant workers serving as the primary laborers in our fields.

Today, due to trade policies, economic depression, political and armed conflict, and

other factors in immigrant workers' home countries, millions of people must migrate to the United States to work, often leaving their children behind. Structural racism and the segregation of people of color into specific occupations in the food system have contributed to the fact that people of color largely are stuck in the lowest-wage food jobs in the U.S., and undocumented immigrants suffer worse working conditions than other workers.

In a Food Chain Workers Alliance survey of over 600 food workers around the U.S., we found that more workers of color are paid subminimum wages compared to white workers. More than one-fifth of all workers of color reported experiencing wage theft, while only 13.2% of all white workers reported having their wages misappropriated. Wage theft can include non-payment of minimum wage, overtime, and/or all the hours worked, as well as the stealing of tips and denial of required rest periods.

Not surprisingly, given these differences,

Given the lower wages and higher rates of wage theft faced by workers of color and immigrant workers, food system workers use public assistance programs at a higher rate than the general workforce in the U.S.

more than one-third of workers surveyed (35.6%) reported feeling that they had been discriminated against by their employers. Black, Latino, and Asian workers felt discriminated against at more than twice the rate reported by white workers (38% v. 18%).

Immigrant workers are also more vulnerable to exploitation in the food system. Undocumented workers were far

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Jake Patner

During the Food Chain Workers Alliance's annual worker leaders retreat in 2014 in Miami, leaders participate in an action outside a Publix store in support of CIW's Fair Food Campaign. Many workers in both the food service industry and food supply chains face food insecurity and wage disparity.

# Strands of One Thread: Ecowomanism

Rebecca Barnes, Associate for Environmental Ministries

*The struggle for gender, racial, and economic justice are all parts of the same thread, and deal with similar questions of power and privilege. Rev. Dr. Melanie L. Harris, Associate Professor of Religion and Ethics at Texas Christian University, explores the voices and perspectives of women from African descent in the below conversation with Rev. Rebecca Barnes.*

## What is eco-womanism?

Eco-womanism centers the voices and perspectives of women from African descent as they engage earth justice. Drawing upon African cosmology, these perspectives understand the earth as sacred. There is a connection between humans, the divine realm and the earth. This worldview guides ethical decision-making, community relationships, and understandings of health and welfare. Showing care and love for the earth are ways in which beings can live out principles of mutuality, reciprocity and equality in relationships: human to human, and human to non-human.

## How does gender relate to environmental justice?

The connection between women and the earth is often seen as both empowering and paradoxical. Because of the hierarchical dualisms that function normatively in Christian and Western thought (i.e. spirit vs. body, male vs. female, heaven vs. earth), there are many ways in which the feminine has been devalued within the tradition. At the same time, the connection that women have with the earth has often been celebrated. For example, a parallel is often drawn between an image of a woman as creator, (creative producer of ideas, thoughts, ethical systems, agency, communities, children, adopted children, space, food) and the earth as a “mother” who also creates.

Within African American communities, historically both women and men carried vast amounts of agricultural knowledge within their beings. This is an important aspect of African American Environmental History and Eco-womanism. It is the work of social activists, civil rights and grassroots organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women and the NAACP wherein we find a deep commitment to earth justice and attention to environmental health disparities. For decades, these organizations and more have been educating about the impact of Climate Change in global communities, and the root of cancer producing toxins lying “dormant” in neighborhood water sources, and have publically endorsed support of EPA efforts to implement the Clean Air Act.

In the 21st century, a majority of members in African American faith communities are women. This means that many who will be actively living out the faith through forms of spiritual activism, social and earth justice activism, are likely to be women. In North America it has often been the women in African American churches who have recognized, analyzed and strategized how to protect their communities and protest environmental racism.

## How are women oppressed in ways that the earth has also been oppressed?

Noting the complexities of hierarchal dualisms and the paradoxes already mentioned, it is true that the logic of domination at work in the enslavement of



African women in the United States is the same logic of domination at work when we think about environmental degradation. Womanist theologian Delores Williams makes this point in an article entitled, “Sin, Nature and Black Women’s Bodies,” wherein she documents how African enslaved women’s bodies were used for breeding. They were raped, sexually violated, and impregnated, some being forced to give birth to multiple sets of children during the course of one lifetime. (Some slave narratives record enslaved women giving birth to more than 24 children.) Williams suggests there is a striking parallel between the logic at work here and the process of strip-mining that can dangerously impact a mountain’s ability to produce or reproduce coal. Just as the sacred womb of a woman is traumatized by rape, so too is the womb of a mountain traumatized by an act of earth violence.

There is a connection between the suffering of women and the suffering of the earth. There is a connection between the logic

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# Traditional Farming and Local Food Economies?

From a presentation by Mariam Mayet, African Centre for Biodiversity in South Africa; edited by Simone Adler, *Other Worlds*, PHP Grant Partner

The historic relationship of Europe and the United States with the African countries is marked by racism and power dynamics that resulted in colonization, forced assimilation, cultural destruction, fierce resistance, and massive extraction—first of resources, and then millions of people to chattel slavery in Europe and the New World. New tools of exploitation, including debt and structural adjustment, replaced colonization as the economic domination continued. Now in the 21st century, seeds, land and farming have become the battlefields where altruistic-sounding development by philanthropic and government-business partnerships are imposing Western agricultural models driven by profit.

Our farmer-managed seed systems in Africa are being criminalized and displaced by a very aggressive green revolution project of corporate occupation by big multinational companies. This violent agrarian transformation is facing profound resistance. African farmer organizations are outraged because decisions have been made and imposed on us in a very patronizing, patriarchal way, as if the agrarian vision and solution has been

designed for us.

The Gates Foundation is funding the Green Revolution, along with the many governments linked to the old hub of capitalism, including the U.S., the UK and the Netherlands. It is working in very close partnership with around 80 African seed companies. The Gates Foundation is the kingpin in charge of coordinating the various Green Revolution initiatives taking place in Africa.

The Green Revolution projects are a very expensive technological package for farmers to buy into. Tens of millions of small-scale, resource-poor farmers cannot afford the high costs of inputs unless they're subsidized by governments and taxpayer money. This money goes into the public purse and out to agribusiness such as Monsanto and Pioneer Hi-Bred for hybrid or improved seed and agrochemicals.

Investment has become a euphemism for land grabs, disposition and dislocation of our communities. We've already seen the beginnings of corporate control and concentration of our seed sector. Monsanto and Pioneer Hi Bred, both U.S.



Vanessa Black, African Centre for Biodiversity

multinational companies, control most of the hybrid maize market in southern Africa. Through the acquisition of South Africa's maize company, Panbaar Seed, by Pioneer HiBred, hybrid pioneer [seeds] will make a lot of incursions [elsewhere] into Africa.

We see and fear a great deal of social dislocation, of collapse of our farming systems—and it's already happened. In industrialized-agriculture countries like South Africa, farmers have become completely deskilled and divorced from production decisions, which are made in laboratories or in far-away board rooms.

In Uganda and other east African countries where the banana is a staple food, the Gates Foundation has invested millions of dollars into a genetically engineered banana project. Their idea is to enable Ugandans and other east Africans to access vitamin A by commercially growing a banana genetically engineered to produce

## » **READ**, *Book review by first director, PCUS World Hunger Program, Jim Cogswell*

After some fifty years of reading everything I could find on World Hunger, I have come across a book that provides the best analysis of all the factors that have created this worldwide crisis, *The End of Plenty* by Dr. Joel K. Bourne, Jr. Dr. Bourne, who serves as professor of Agronomy at North Carolina State University, has written this book as the culmination of more than a decade of study and travel around the world to countries seriously affected by hunger.

He analyzes the Green Revolution which, while bringing the benefits of modern scientific agriculture, has disrupted traditional farming and brought ecological devastation in its wake. He goes further to introduce the Blue Revolution, which has seriously affected the world's seas that are farmed for food. What becomes clear is that, while food aid is very important as a stopgap in crisis situation, as world citizens we must address deeper systemic issues. This is a book which should be read by every serious Christian.

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## Race Gives Me Poetry

Rev. Laura M. Cheifetz, Vice President of Church & Public Relations, Presbyterian Publishing Corporation

Racism kills. It dehumanizes us all, telling some of us we are less than human and rendering others of us incapable of having a decent conversation about it. It takes our best intentions and misshapes them beyond recognition; no matter what we do or what we mean to do, we move and breathe and live within laws and a cultural reality that is racist.

But the one good thing racism has given me is “Asian American.”

Asian American is a social construct, not a biological one. It is a category I fall into by virtue of nothing more than my mother’s ancestors. No person from Asia shows up in the U.S. and automatically feels linked to people from other Asian countries.

Asian American identity isn’t about rice, although I’ve joked about this before. People of many races eat rice, and even rice within Asian American communities has great diversity. It isn’t about any food or flavor, really, which means any dish or dressing labeled “Asian” is just asking for me to mock the ignorance of said dressing’s manufacturer. I can settle for “Asian” if it means we avoid the dreaded, inappropriate, and colonial “O” word.

Asian American identity isn’t about a shared language. 2,197 distinct languages are spoken on the continent of Asia, according to the Linguistic Society of America. Asian Americans do not share a religion or a philosophy.

Asian American identity isn’t about how we ended up in the U.S. We came as refugees, immigrants, adoptees, victims of human trafficking, and indentured labor. We passed through New Zealand or Peru or Canada or the United Kingdom or Brazil before we came here.

What binds us together? American racism.



Racial identity means we who come with 2,197 different ways of seeing the world and expressing ourselves can coalesce into one Asian America.

Every person who is Asian American and who went to elementary school before yesterday in a non-Asian area of town was made to feel ashamed of the food in his/her lunchbox. We are disproportionately affected by high rates of mental health issues. We are all impacted by the bamboo ceiling, by almost no presence in corporate board rooms of industries in which we are disproportionately represented, by lower-than-average rates of political representation despite our growing political presence, and by the relative invisibility we and our issues face due to the way we are lumped together as “Asian American.” We are all impacted by the model minority myth, dividing us from other communities of color, and putting unhealthy levels of pressure on us.

That’s what we have in common.

But race in the U.S. has a positive side. (Confused? Bear with me.)

Racism is about dehumanizing us, but racial identity isn’t bad. Racism strips me of my humanity, and racial identity hands it right

back. Racial identity is beautiful. Racial identity is powerful. God made us different and lovely and through the ugliness of white supremacy, some of us have found belonging.

One of the primary old-school theological justifications for fighting racism is God’s mandate to care for “the least of these.” I have come to believe this theological formulation is incorrect. We who are people of color are not the least of these, at least not inherently so. We are God’s joy and intention for humanity. The entire book of Acts tells us diversity is impossible to avoid, that God speaks our languages, that no one is unclean or undesirable. That is why racism is so bad. Racism seeks to disrupt God’s joy. Positive racial identity helps make God’s intention a reality.

I am part of a group identity founded on solidarity in the face of injustice, coupled with great food. Asian Americans have found expression through music, the visual arts, literature, theatre, theology, Biblical

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# Trans-Pacific Partnership Projected Impact on Poverty

Rev. Pamela Lupfer, *Joining Hands Campaign Organizer on Trade issues*



The U.N. expresses concern over the “chilling effect” of ISDS awards which penalize governments for enacting regulations to protect the environment. The mechanism for resolving controversies between investors and States found in the TPP is particularly dangerous for Peru and its citizens.

In November 2015, the U.S. government released the final text of the Transpacific Partnership (TPP), an agreement that the U.S. negotiated behind closed doors for seven years, with 500 corporate trade advisors given access while the public and press were shut out. (*Learn more about the TPP on page 10*)

When the text of the TPP was released, it confirmed the concerns and fears that most had expressed. Contrary to the opinion of Michael Froman, the U.S. Trade Representative who supports it, that TPP will be “great not only for the US economy...but for global development too,” there are many concerns that in fact TPP will have a negative impact on jobs, the economy and people in the U.S.

## TPP will affect jobs and wages

The history of past trade agreements shows that they often have had negative impacts both in the U.S. and in countries

that were part of it. According to the Economic Policy Institute, since the Northern America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was put in place, nearly five million American manufacturing jobs have been lost, and over 60,000 American manufacturing facilities have closed. Jobs are created in the United States when there are increases in U.S. exports. But increases in imports lead to job loss—by destroying existing jobs and preventing new job creation—as imports displace goods that otherwise would have been made in the country by American workers. Under NAFTA, U.S. manufacturing imports have soared while growth of U.S. manufacturing exports has slowed. A big concern about the TPP is that it will replicate and expand

the NAFTA’s model. Another major concern regarding wages is that TPP will push down American wages by putting them in direct competition with workers in Vietnam who make less than 65 cents per hour.

## TPP and access to medicine

A major concern about the TPP is that some of its provisions will delay the introduction of low-cost generic medication, increasing health care prices and reducing access to medicine both in the United States and abroad. There are TPP provisions that may enable pharmaceutical companies to challenge Medicare drug listing decisions and Medicaid reimbursements and constrain future U.S. policy reforms to reduce healthcare costs.

## TPP and environment

The TPP fails to mention climate change even once in its thousands of pages. It also will also provide corporations with new tools for attacking environmental and consumer protection. With the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) mechanism included in the TPP, if a new law or regulation ends up costing foreign investors “lost planned profits”, they can sue the government to either get rid of the law or to force them to pay up to hundreds of millions of dollars in fines and penalties to the investors. After the Obama administration rejected the Keystone Pipeline, the company Transcanada went to court to claim that the rejection of that

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1. Froman, Michael, “Statement by Ambassador Froman on the Release of the Trans-Pacific Partnership Text.” Nov. 5, 2015.
2. De Zayas, Alfred; Aguilar, Catalina Devandas; Puras, Dainus; Shaheed, Farida; Knaul, Gabriella; Helver, Hilal; Bohoslavsky, Juan; Heller, Leo; Tauli-Corpuz, Victoria Lucia; Dandan, Virginia. “UN experts voice concern over adverse impact of free trade and investment agreements on human rights.” United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner. Geneva, June, 2, 2015
3. UNOHCHR, De Zavas, et.al.



*Injustice in the food system: continued from page 4*

more concentrated in lower-wage jobs – less than one percent of undocumented workers reported earning more than 150% of the poverty line, compared to 20% of documented workers. The median wage reported by undocumented workers – \$7.60 per hour – was significantly lower than the median wage reported by all other workers, which was \$10 per hour.

Given the lower wages and higher rates of wage theft faced by workers of color and immigrant workers, food system workers use public assistance programs at a higher rate than the general workforce in the U.S. In particular, almost 14% of food system workers use food stamps, more than 150% the rate of use by all of the employed frontline workers in the U.S. (8.3%). It's a sad irony that food workers, despite these public assistance programs, suffer a higher rate of food insecurity than all U.S. workers combined. Taxpayers thus bear the cost of low wages and food insecurity among workers in the food system.

Despite these great challenges facing food workers, the hands that feed us are organizing and rising up. With support from the Presbyterian Hunger Program, the Food Chain Workers Alliance has grown from 9 member groups in 2009 to 27 today. Food workers are joining together through our members and many other organizations to win a voice on the job, living wages, and safer working conditions, as well as changes to laws and policies, such as an increase in the minimum wage and institutional food purchasing policies that include labor standards.

We have hope that we can take apart the structural racism and economically unjust class structure that has kept so many food workers, especially those of color, in poverty for so long. And you can be a part of this change by supporting these workers' organizing and policy advocacy efforts. Contact PHP to learn ways to support this work!

*Strands of One Thread: continued from page 5*

that allows for these oppressions to take place in human and non-human (earth) community. Tracing that connection, (in this case) in the logic that purports racial superiority and gender oppression to the logic that insists the earth be controlled and dominated is a part of the work of Eco-womanism. When we look towards solutions in the form of racial justice and gender justice we are also simultaneously looking for solutions for earth justice.

**What is part of your "earth story" or personal connection to caring for the earth?**

Uncovering one's eco-memory is the first step of an eco-womanist method. Essentially this invites you to reflect upon your own relationship with the earth and to recall a story from your childhood or your life in which you experienced a connection to nature.

My eco-memory dates back to before I was born. I am a descendent of African American sharecroppers who migrated from Mississippi to Dearfield, Colorado, during the Great Migration. In order to escape the death-dealing atmosphere of the Jim and Jane Crow Era, my grandparents sacrificed, leaving their home and family to help establish a community. Dearfield was one of the first all Black settlements in the U.S. While the farming community did not last long (1910-1920), my own eco-heritage includes the courage of grandparents who brought with them deep agricultural knowledge about how to respect, honor and work with southern soil. Just as important, however, is their genius in having to learn how to cultivate those gifts of knowledge to work with, respect and honor the rocky soil of Colorado. Making a way out of no way, and partnering with the earth, I believe that a part of my eco-story is also the eco-story of millions of African Americans whose ancestors also joined the Great Migration.

*Bill Gates: continued from page 6*

beta carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A, as if a diverse diet won't give Africans this vitamin.

Ugandans grow around 27 varieties or more of bananas. So this super banana project is a Trojan horse; it's very similar to the golden rice they've been trying to commercialize since the mid-80s, which has gone nowhere after a huge expenditure of money. They've even started the process of feeding trials of the GM banana to U.S. citizens at Iowa State University. It's a way to capture the commercial markets and pry open countries that are closed to GMOs, like Uganda.

The Green Revolution reviles peasant farming systems as backward and responsible for poverty and starvation in Africa. It's as if there's a concerted effort to make these systems obsolete, to do away with them. But 80 percent of our population live in rural areas and about 70 percent of income is generated from agriculture, so what is going to happen when they empty out our rural areas? Where are all these people going to go?

I want you to reimagine Africa as a vibrant continent where farmers are in control of their seed systems, are proud of their knowledge systems, and share seeds from generation to generation through the age-old practice of exchange where they are self-reliant on a huge diversity of seeds under their control, where women play an important role in production decisions, seed selection, and breeding — and where our local food economies find their roots.

**» LEARN MORE**

This vision of a world where local food economies take root and food sovereignty is possible is at the heart of much of PHP's work. Visit [www.pcusa.org/food](http://www.pcusa.org/food) to learn more.

TPP: continued from page 1

large corporations who will provide such services at greater cost to consumers.

- Broadens the rights of foreign investors by providing them with the channels to sue a State if the profits generated by the investor do not meet its expectations due to actions of the State.
- Lowers restrictions on the internal controls of food and medicines that enter a country (genetically modified organisms, foods with hormones, or other substances potentially dangerous to health).

In short, the governments that represent democratic states such as Peru are being diminished in their capacity to legislate and establish national laws to protect labor, the

environment, health and human rights.

The mechanism for resolving controversies between investors and States found in the TPP is particularly dangerous for Peru and its citizens. If a law affects the projected earnings of a foreign investor, that investor may sue the State, demanding compensation for the value of the expected earnings, which would be paid by public funds.

Nonetheless, these lawsuits can emerge easily because the expected profits of investors can be very sensitive to environmental protections, public health laws, tax laws, etc. What is most problematic however is that these lawsuits do not occur in ordinary tribunals, rather in special international tribunals composed by three lawyers, who are typically more experienced in corporate law than in environmental or human rights law. Their decisions are based on the rules of

the trade agreement itself and the regulations of the court, as opposed to the constitution of the country and the domestic courts of the complainee's country.

Peru already faces several such lawsuits within the framework of other trade agreements (as do many other countries in Latin America). One in particular is the lawsuit filed by the U.S. company Renco Group (holding company of the Peruvian company Doe Run Peru). Just defending itself in the dispute process has already cost Peru six million US dollars.

It is unbelievable how the free trade agreement between the U.S. and Peru (and now potentially the TPP) gives power to an investor like Renco Group to sue the State of Peru, in this case for \$800 million, claiming a supposed "indirect expropriation" of its investment by the State due to costly environmental laws, despite the social and environmental behavior of the company that was disastrous for the local population (lead contamination of children and pollution of water, air and soil) during its years of operating the Doe Run Peru metallurgical smelter in the town of La Oroya.

Nonetheless, Renco Group and its subsidiary Doe Run Peru have the security, not only of recuperating supposed losses through the arbitration, but also of avoiding justice in the United States where a class action suit filed on behalf of the children of La Oroya against Renco Group has been suspended until the outcome of the arbitration filed in the framework of the trade agreement. A favorable outcome for Renco Group in the international arbitration would also make the State of Peru responsible for any losses in the class action suit.

The governments of the global South find themselves increasingly subject to rules set by transnational corporations, as the world continues to orient itself to satisfy the demands of the global market and profit, even when this leads to inequality and social conflicts over resources.

## » LEARN MORE

The Transpacific Partnership (TPP) is an economic and trade agreement among 12 Pacific Rim countries that aims to reduce and eventually eliminate tariff and other market barriers to most goods, services and agriculture. The countries involved in the TPP are Australia, Brunei, Canada, Chile, Japan, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Peru, the United States, Thailand, and Vietnam.

Negotiations for the TPP have been happening secretly for the last seven years, and even members of Congress were kept in the dark while corporate advisors were allowed in the negotiations. The final text of the TPP was released on November 2015. A study of the text confirmed the concerns that most churches, non-profits, and labor unions have had for years. Below are the main ones:

**Greater rights to corporations:** TPP will empower investors and corporations to challenge countries' environmental and climate safeguards in unaccountable trade tribunals via the controversial investor-state dispute settlement system.

**Environment:** The TPP would increase risks to our air, water and climate.

**Labor rights:** The TPP would make it easier for corporations to offshore American jobs.

**Health concerns:** The TPP will enhance or extend patents and copyright protections for medicines, which in turn will lead to higher healthcare costs, giving pharmaceutical corporations new monopoly rights to keep lower costs generic drugs off the market.

The good news is that signing the TPP is not the same as it being ratified by Congress. If enough pressure is put on our Congress members, the entire thing can still be derailed. That's where you come in.

Visit [capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=68852626](http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=68852626) and write your Congress member today.

*Impact on poverty: continued from page 8*

project violates U.S. obligations under NAFTA and is asking for \$15 billion in compensation from taxpayers. According to Public Citizen, even when governments win, under TPP rules they can be ordered to pay for the costs and legal fees, which averages \$8 million per case.

A report last June from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner on Human Rights expressed grave concerns about the potential adverse effects of trade agreements like the TTP and TTIP (Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership):

“There is a legitimate concern that both bilateral and multilateral investment treaties might aggravate the problem of extreme poverty, jeopardize fair and efficient foreign debt renegotiation, and affect the rights of indigenous peoples, minorities, persons with disabilities, older persons, and other persons living in vulnerable situations.”

Our call as Christians is clear – we are to “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.” (Micah 6.8) The TPP and other trade agreements like it abandon these principles, and with it they abandon the global poor and increase inequality.

The U.N. report also expresses concern over the “chilling effect” of ISDS awards which penalize governments for enacting regulations to protect the environment, worker rights, food security, access to medicines and wages. These increasingly

massive financial penalties in effect cause legislatures to question whether the laws they pass will not be rendered unenforceable and cause prohibitive costs to taxpayers due to ISDS favoring of corporate interests over the citizenry.

The outcry against these massive trade deals is being heard far and wide—from the United Nations to noted economists to representatives of workers and indigenous populations worldwide and our Joining Hands mission partners. Trade deals that seek only to enrich corporations at the expense of workers, the global poor, the environment, human rights, food safety and healthcare do not address the root causes of injustice or confront the structures of exploitation and injustice.

Our call as Christians is clear – we are to “do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with our God.” (Micah 6.8) The TPP and other trade agreements like it abandon these principles, and with it they abandon the global poor and increase inequality.

*Race: continued from page 9*

hermeneutics, activism, and spaces invisible to most white Americans. Ambiguous as it may be, Asian Americans have a space that grounds us. It is a space that reflects the beauty of our aunts and uncles, the ones who left countries with no hope of return, the ones who endured in joy despite hatred, discrimination, being driven out by mobs, and who built this country’s infrastructure only to face death by dynamite. It is a space that tells us we look perfect in a country that says our skin is too dark, our hair too coarse, our eyes too narrow, our noses too flat, our food too smelly, our religion too foreign, our tastes too exotic, our language too strange-sounding.

Asian Americans are a diasporic people. We aren’t bound by the limitations of borders.

Our pride isn’t just American; our pride is in our ancestors, the countries they came from, and their resolve upon arriving in the U.S.

Asian America isn’t all fun and games. Racism still sucks. And it isn’t easy to be part of a very diverse community. However, because we have learned to live together despite our differences in beliefs, cultures, worldviews, languages, and values, we are in a unique position to teach the church about what it means to be in diverse community in the hardest of times, even when that community doesn’t feel like it makes sense. We know what it is to live, have conflict, get tripped up in cultural miscommunications, and create community in the midst of cultural indifference and ongoing discrimination.

Race isn’t bad. Racism is bad.

The specificity of our racial identity, as people of color, in fact, is very good. My racial identity reminds me I’m not alone. A racial identity allows me to find my way in the midst of a racist country that hasn’t yet agreed I should exist. I have a community of people who share many of my same experiences. I have a community where we feed each other and laugh together at the madness of the world. I have a community of music and art and poetry and theology and worship.

This article has been edited to fit this format. It originally appeared in its entirety in *Unbound: An Interactive Journal of Christian Social Justice* and can be read at [justiceunbound.org/carousel/race-gives-me-poetry/](http://justiceunbound.org/carousel/race-gives-me-poetry/).



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