



UNITED CHURCH
OF CHRIST



November 13, 2006

Dear Member of Congress:

Attached please find a letter from Afro-Peruvian and Afro-Colombian organizations in Peru and Colombia regarding free trade agreements with the United States. Writing on behalf of 15 million Afro-descendant people, the groups are expressing their concerns about the negative impact the free trade agreements, as currently negotiated, will have on their communities.

Their grave concerns about the trade agreements are the following:

1. The trade agreements lack specific labor rules to protect the Afro-descendants and indigenous peoples from discriminatory practices endemic in Peru and Colombia.
2. The trade agreements will pit the largely 8 million small, Afro-descendant and indigenous farmers against heavily subsidized U.S. agricultural producers, causing even greater impoverishment of the populations and risking their extinction.
3. The trade agreements' investment rules threaten Afro-descendant and indigenous communities with displacement due to their proximity to natural resources risking again their extinction and extensive environmental damage.
4. The trade agreements' intellectual property laws will strengthen the patent rights of multinational corporations leading to an increase in the cost of health care, already prohibitive to poor Afro-descendants, and threatening ownership of traditional medicines.

Until there are real and explicitly stated protections for the Afro-descendant communities, the signers urge you to vote against the current and any similar trade agreements in the region. We ask that you take their concerns into consideration when you cast your vote. If we can facilitate with providing you with any further information on this matter, please let us know.

Sincerely,

Marino Cordoba and Charo Mina Rojas
The Association for Internally Displaced Afro-Colombians USA (AFRODES USA)

Nicole Lee
TransAfrica Forum

Prof. Joseph Jordan
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