

stop the FTAA: Pittsburgh call to and for action- in Miami and locally

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MOVEMENT

Pittsburgh Call To and For Action against the FTAA- in Miami and at home

This November (20-22) in Miami, US Government representatives will meet counterparts from 33 other countries to complete negotiations on a vast "treaty" that will have far-reaching effects on our collective way of life. This treaty is called the Free Trade Area of Americas (FTAA). It's an international business deal, disguised as a proposed treaty that would create the world's largest free market zone, affecting 650 million people and \$9 trillion in capital. It's essentially a more expansive (in scope and size) version of NAFTA that would encompass all the countries in our Hemisphere (except for Cuba).

The FTAA allows corporations to bypass democratically adopted environmental or worker protection laws, increasing corporate power while endangering the lives of millions of people, disproportionately affecting women and people of color. The FTAA threatens to commodify our lives by turning over the control of our schools, electricity, water and food to corporations whose only interest is more profit. What NAFTA did to the industrial unions, the FTAA will do to the building and service trades with the predictable result of crushing many growing unions.

It is also being negotiated in secret, which is why most of the general public here hasn't heard of it.

Since 1994, millions of people have been organizing to stop this agreement, primarily in the Global South where discussion about the FTAA is greater in the media and the effects are more fatal. From every sector of civil society the cry rings out that we will not allow the FTAA to come into existence. Just like the WTO, if the FTAA passes it will become a noose around the neck of any government or social movement that seeks to oppose elements of corporate globalization. Marches, petitions, rallies, blockades, forums, speaking tours, street theatre, banner drops, occupations and countless other forms of resistance have been occurring as the campaign continues to grow.

Now the FTAA negotiations are nearing completion and the resistance movement is nearing an historic confrontation. On November 20-22, the FTAA ministerial summit will take place in Miami with the goal of producing a final agreement to be ratified by member countries. Once this agreement is finalized it will be virtually impossible to stop passage in Congress where, due to the fast track trade authority pushed through by corporate interests, it will face a simple up-or-down vote. The way to stop this monstrosity is to create enough pressure and visibility on what is being decided that the backlash forces governments to abandon negotiations. Citizen pressure can be the deciding factor. We killed the Multi-lateral Agreement on Investments in 1998 (many of its proposed new corporate rights are contained in the FTAA) and we can kill this. This summit is the first US ministerial since the 1999 WTO meetings were derailed in Seattle and the first ministerial summit in the North since the 2001 FTAA in Quebec City. This summit will bring together an estimated 50,000+ people determined to express their opposition to the agreement.

This confrontation will be decided in the streets and the meeting rooms of Miami, and everything is at stake. We are at a crossroads. On the one hand, the FTAA is the logical next step in a system of corporate domination over everyone and everything on Earth. This model of neo-liberalism seeks to elevate profit and corporate rights above all else. On the other hand, there is the global justice movement and its quest to bring precepts of mutual-aid, sustainability, universal human and economic rights and direct participatory democracy to all.

What's Pittsburgh doing about all this?

The Pittsburgh-based campaign to stop the FTAA is a project of the Thomas Merton Center organizing around these primary goals:

1: To contribute to the Hemispheric Campaign to Prevent Passage of the FTAA. 2: To contribute to the effort to disrupt the ministerial meetings in Miami. 3: To unite the various social forces being affected by neo-liberalism and take action locally to reverse the process in the long-term. 4: To increase awareness of the alternatives to corporate globalization. 5: To highlight and make the connections of the FTAA to the local manifestations of neo-liberal policies such as cuts in transit, efforts to privatize the garbage service, corporatization of education, and more.

To accomplish this, we are mobilizing a massive campaign with a few key components:

Firstly, we're planning to organize a contingent of 300 people to travel from Pittsburgh to Miami to take part in events opposing the FTAA meetings. Logistically this is the biggest undertaking many of us have been involved in. The cost right now is estimated at \$45/person for the 3-day trip that promises to be the activist event of the year :)

Secondly, we are focusing on education and outreach. We're talking to people, trying to get everyone involved because this affects us all: steelworkers, doctors, teachers, municipal workers, environmentalists, high school and college students, and more. We'll also be going door-to-door for 30 straight days, talking at churches, tabling and doing a lot of the face-to-face outreach we've always wanted to do as part of a campaign but never had the time.

Thirdly, we're organizing a massive local rally on November 15th against the FTAA and neo-liberalism on the weekend before the FTAA meetings. What better way to focus on the summit than to bring thousands of people to the streets of Pittsburgh?

We meet at 2:00pm every Saturday at the Thomas Merton Center.

You can contact the Pittsburgh FTAA Project at: [pittsburgh\\_faa@hotmail.com](mailto:pittsburgh_faa@hotmail.com) [www.thomasmertoncenter.org/flaa](http://www.thomasmertoncenter.org/flaa) (website not yet active) 412-361-3022 (ask for Marie) FTAA c/o Thomas Merton Center 5125 Penn Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15224

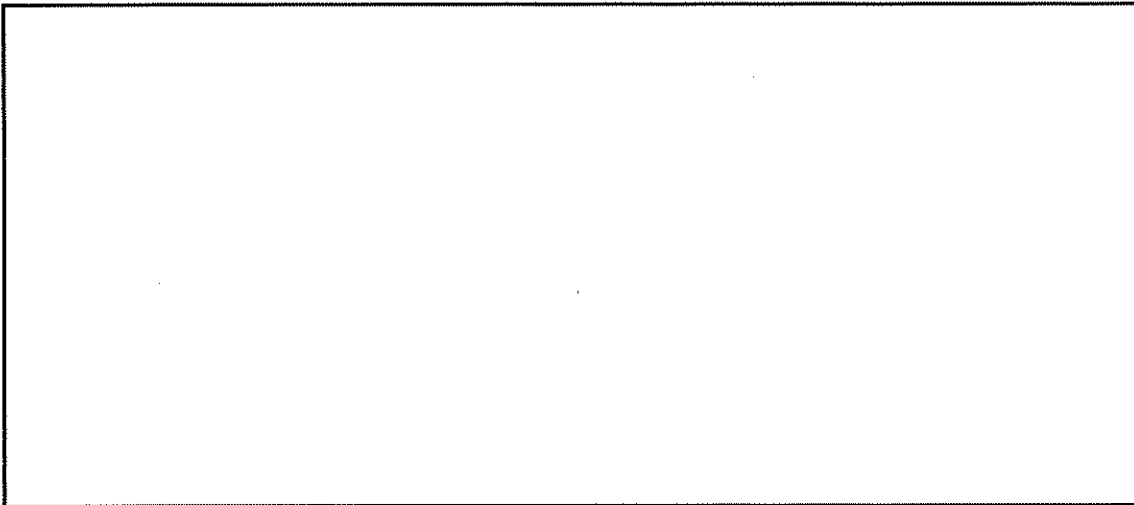
Parts of the call taken from the People Consultation against the FTAA! They rock!



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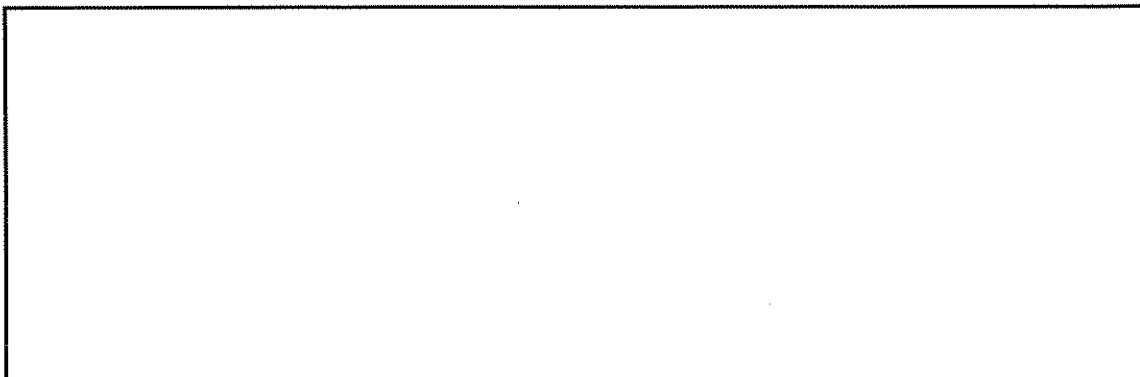
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On April 19th President Bush is coming to Pittsburgh! He will be here to raise hundreds of thousands of dollars at a senatorial fundraiser and attend a 5:30pm rally taking place inside the David L. Lawrence Convention center. Bush is also coming because he believes that Pennsylvania is a key part of any chance he has for a 2nd term in office. In response to the visit from the 'killer from Crawford', POG is calling for a Black Bloc (wearing all black clothing and bandannas)/direct action cluster, of individuals and affinity groups to gather as part of the planned protests. This cluster will begin assembling at: 5:00pm at 10th and Penn Ave. (Downtown Pittsburgh) A plethora of other affinity groups and organizations will be gathering at that same location as part of the Thomas Merton Center's call to respond.



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