



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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## **Struggling Chicago Workers Rally on Labor Day to Demand a Trade Deal That's Fair to Families—or No Deal at All**

CHICAGO, IL – Earlier today, Chicagoans representing dozens of community groups as well as national allies converged at the corner of Columbus and Balbo in Grant Park for a rally and march to demand a voice in the Trans-Pacific Free Trade Agreement negotiations starting tomorrow at the Hilton on Michigan Ave.

While the focus of the rally was on preventing the potentially harmful impact the Pacific Rim trade agreement could have locally upon Chicago families, some well-known national figures were on hand to help get the word out about the need for a fair deal—or no deal at all.

They included Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield, co-founders of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream, who spoke out about the need for fair trade instead of free trade “Just like there's more than one way to do business, there's more than one way to do trade policy,” said Greenfield. “We encourage trade negotiators to create an agreement that works for working people, farmers and the environment in all countries.”

Many in the crowd had personal experience with the impact of free trade. Chicago families currently suffer from the third highest metropolitan poverty rate in the country—a figure that has only been worsened by the estimated 35,000 Illinois jobs lost to NAFTA.

“I've spoken with a lot of working families that are really worried about the impact this new trade agreement will have on unemployment,” said Lauren Cumbia, Deputy Director of Stand Up! Chicago, a coalition of community organizations that helped plan the rally. “They understand that big banks and corporations have had a chance to see the draft trade agreements and give input while the rest of us are being kept in the dark. We're all here to demand an agreement that puts families first instead of corporations.”

During the rally, a series of speakers shared a long list of concerns about the proposed deal, including how it could restrict access to life-saving medications by expanding the length of patents, rollback health-preserving environmental regulations, and potentially destroy family farms.

The recurring theme of the rally and march, however, was jobs. Arthur Stamoulis, Executive Director of Citizens Trade Campaign, explained: “People are here because we can't afford a NAFTA of the Pacific—a trade agreement that offshores more manufacturing and service jobs, reduces tax revenues and pushes down the wages and benefits of the jobs that remain.”

The rally was followed by a march down Balbo to the Hilton at 720 S. Michigan Ave., the site where trade negotiations will begin tomorrow. After an orderly but energetic march, families gathered in Grant Park for the rally's sweet conclusion: free Ben & Jerry's ice cream.

The rally was the first of a series of actions taking place during the Trans-Pacific Free Trade Agreement negotiations, including the delivery of over 10,000 postcards demanding a fair deal from negotiators by Ben Cohen and Jerry Greenfield of Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream and others on Tuesday, September 6, at 11:00 a.m. outside the Hilton at Balbo and Michigan.

**Endorsing Organizations Include:** *Arise Chicago | Brightfuturejobs.com | Chicago Alliance Against Racist and Political Repression | Chicago Alliance of Charter Teachers and Staff Local 4343, IFT-AFT | Chicago Coalition of Labor Union Women | Chicago Fair Trade | Chicago Federation of Labor | Chicago Jobs with Justice | Chicago Political Economy Group | Chicago Physicians for Social Responsibility | Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) | Citizen's Trade Campaign Committee for New Priorities | Communications Workers of America (CWA) | CWA National Women's Committee | Disabled Americans Want Work Now (DAWWN) | Friends of the Earth | HealthGAP | International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers | International Brotherhood of Teamsters | International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 21 | International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) Local 21 | International Labor Rights Forum | National Family Farm Coalition | New-New Deal Group | NOLSW UAW Local 2320 | Oak Park Coalition for Truth and Justice | Public Citizen | Service Employees International Union (SEIU) | Sierra Club | Steelworkers Organization of Active Retirees (SOAR) | South Halsted Unemployed Action Center | Southside Together Organizing for Power (STOP) | Stand Up! Chicago | Sweat Free Communities | United Steelworkers (USW) | United Steelworkers International Union (USW) | United Steelworkers District 7 | United Electrical Workers (UE) | United Students Against Sweatshops | Workers United*

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For a background memo on the Trans-Pacific Free Trade Agreement, visit <http://standupchicago.org/press-room>.