

Combatting Divisive Trade Myths & Promoting Cross-Border Solidarity

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Calibrating Your **Trade B.S. Detector**

- (1) **WATCH OUT FOR BOGUS CLAIMS THAT OBSCURE WHO’S RESPONSIBLE FOR HARMFUL TRADE POLICIES.** Examples include: “*The United States is losing to other countries in trade negotiations*” or “*Other countries got the better of the U.S. in past trade deals.*” 🤡🤡🤡

The idea that other countries are getting the better of the United States in trade negotiations isn’t accurate. The truth is that the U.S. government sets the terms of U.S. trade deals utilizing a process that gives corporate lobbyists privileged access to negotiators and draft texts while excluding most others. To date, trade deals have worked exactly as intended, benefiting transnational corporations and other elites, with little regard to the harm they cause most working people both at home and abroad. The concept of one country getting the better of another ignores the fact that corporate-driven trade agreements have been disastrous for working people across borders, and it hides who is truly responsible for these deals — U.S.-based corporations, not foreign governments.

- (2) **BE WEARY OF SLOGANS THAT FALSELY CONFLATE NATIONALITY WITH SHARED ECONOMIC INTEREST.** Examples include: “*It’s time to start putting ‘America First’ in our trade policy.*” 🤡🤡🤡

The slogan “America First” is very misleading. It is often used to imply that the U.S. government is somehow putting foreign interests ahead of those of U.S. citizens in trade deals — which is completely untrue. Trade deals have instead put the interests of big corporations ahead of the interests of working people both at home and abroad. In addition to promoting xenophobia, which is bad enough in-and-of-itself, another danger of the term “America First” is that it incorrectly suggests that the interests of American businesses, CEOs and Wall Street are somehow the same as the interests of American workers. This improper clumping together of “American” interests enables corporate elites to continue dominating trade policymaking rather than prioritizing cross-border worker interests like labor rights, wage increases and job creation.

(3) BE SKEPTICAL OF EMPTY CRITIQUES OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

ABROAD. Examples include: *Criticizing the Chinese government for human rights abuses without actually supporting human rights policies.* 🙄🙄🙄

The unjust actions of foreign governments deserve to be criticized, but should be done so in a way that supports people fighting those abuses on the frontlines rather than smearing entire nationalities. Calling out labor rights abuses by the Chinese government, for instance, without actually supporting human rights policies does nothing to solve the problem — and, if not grounded in cross-border solidarity, can risk fanning increased racial hatred and violence against Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans. Such rhetoric can also serve to camouflage more-of-the-same policies that privilege U.S. corporate interests at the expense of working people at home and abroad, such as former President Trump’s 2020 U.S.-China trade deal, which not only failed to mention labor and other human rights abuses in China, but actually included provisions like investor and intellectual property protections designed to help U.S. corporations that move jobs to China to take advantage of such rights abuses.

(4) CHALLENGE FALSE DICHOTOMIES AND ARTIFICIAL LIMITS IN THE

TRADE POLICY DEBATE. Examples include: *“If you want to stop trade deals from offshoring jobs, you need to support ‘America First’ nationalism” or “If you’re worried about the dangers of ugly economic nationalism, you need to support ‘free trade.’”*



The mainstream media often portrays the limits of the trade debate as between business-as-usual, corporate-driven trade agreements and racist, xenophobic “America First” rhetoric. We absolutely cannot double-down on devastating “free trade” policies that have already destroyed millions of U.S. livelihoods, reduced the wages and benefits of the jobs that are left and have often been even worse for working people in other countries. Nor can we hope to “fix” these policies by continuing to allow U.S.-based corporations to call the shots on trade policy just because they’re “American.” A better alternative is a global justice approach that recognizes that working people in different countries often have shared interests — and that policies designed to uplift labor rights, environmental standards and other human rights across borders are necessary for ending the global race to the bottom in jobs, wages and working conditions.

Defining Key Terms

Basic Approaches to Trade Policymaking

Neoliberalism

Neoliberalism is based on the belief that “free market” can solve society’s needs without outside intervention by the government or other forces. It is associated with “free trade,” deregulation, austerity and privatization.

Key Features

- Within trade policy, neoliberalism is most associated with pacts such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), as well as the various agreements within the World Trade Organization (WTO).
- These corporate-driven trade policies help large corporations shift jobs around the globe to wherever workers are the most exploited and environmental regulations are the weakest. They are a massive driver of inequality both within and between nations.
- These so-called “trade” agreements have also become a tool for restricting government action on a host of regulatory issues including climate change, access to medicine, food safety, consumer privacy and more.

Nationalism

Nationalism is the concept that one’s nationality is the core characteristic that ties people together and that policy decisions should be based upon. It is best illustrated in the United States by “America First” rhetoric.

Key Features

- Nationalism involves the scapegoating of foreigners for people’s problems, and often makes hidden or direct appeals to racism, xenophobia and antisemitism. It is associated with a rise in violence and harassment against people of color, immigrants and Jews.
- Nationalism obscures the real sources of and solutions to economic and social problems. It promotes the false narrative that working people’s interests are more aligned with their bosses’ interests than with the interests of workers in other countries. It also falsely implies that national policies are being written in the interests of people abroad, rather than in the interests of the corporate elites who dominate domestic policymaking in almost every country.
- Historically, nationalism has been a core ideology within fascist movements like the Nazis; in the United States, “America First” is a term widely advocated for by the Ku Klux Klan (KKK). Nationalism is the bedrock of extremely dangerous political movements.

Global Justice

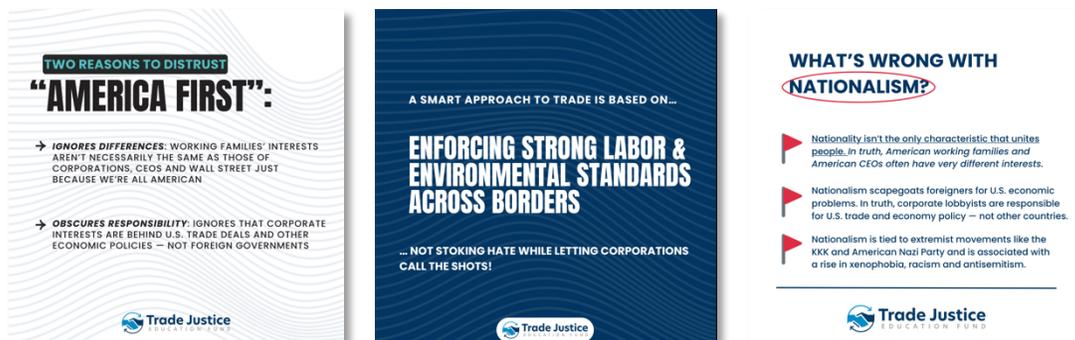
A global justice approach to trade policy is based on the concept that working people in different countries often share certain basic interests and can improve their quality of life by acting in solidarity with one another. It promotes the enforcement of labor, environmental and other human rights standards across borders.

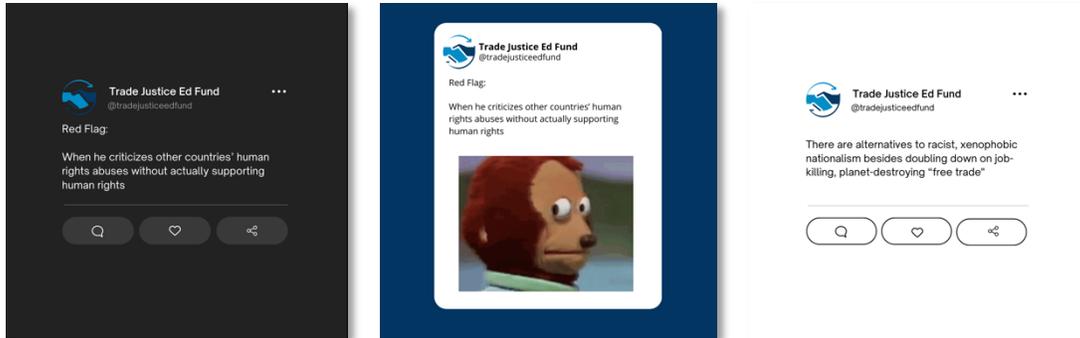
Key Features

- A global justice approach to trade policy recognizes that corporations have been the primary driver of the neoliberal trade policies that have been so harmful to working people in all countries, and that continuing to allow corporate interests to call the shots in the structuring of the global economy will fix nothing.
- A global justice approach seeks to set basic floors for labor rights, environmental protection, consumer safety and other standards below which no country is permitted to drop, and to use trade agreements to enforce those internationally agreed-upon standards. In doing so, the incentive for companies to offshore jobs will be reduced, new markets for U.S.-made goods will be created, and the working and living conditions for people everywhere will improve.
- A global justice approach benefits from open and transparent trade negotiating processes that enable the public to participate meaningfully in trade policymaking. It rejects the corporate-dominated processes associated with both neoliberalism and nationalism.

Social Media Resources

Please feel free to use any of these images on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and other platforms. Send your members and images to clayton@tradejusticeedfund.org or tag [@TradeJusticeEd](https://www.instagram.com/TradeJusticeEd).





FULL SIZE COPIES AT: <http://tinyurl.com/tradejusticesocial>

Writing a Letter to the Editor

Calling Out Divisive Trade Rhetoric

Letters to the Editor matter! They are an excellent means of sharing your opinions with a large audience. Because politicians often read the letters section of the local newspaper to keep track of public opinion, they are also a great way of communicating with your elected officials. Over the long term, letters can even help to shape news coverage.

Tips for Getting Published:

- Keep your letter short. In most instances, your letter should be no more than five or six sentences.
- Don't try to make too many points in one letter. Stick to one basic point and make a simple argument.
- Be opinionated, but know that name-calling, insults and inflammatory language will likely prevent your letter from being published.

- If at all possible, write your letter in response to an article or editorial that recently appeared in the newspaper you're writing.
- Include your name, mailing address and telephone number so the paper can verify that you submitted the letter.

Where to Find Submission Guidelines:

- This quickest way to find submission guidelines for a specific newspaper is often just to Google "submit letter to the editor" and the name of the newspaper.
- Otherwise, you can search the newspaper's website starting with any "Contact Us" and "Opinion" sections for a letters submission form and/or email address.

Potential Talking Points on "America First":

- "America First" is a very misleading slogan, and I was disappointed to read [NAME] use it in "[ARTICLE/OPED TITLE]," ([DATE PUBLISHED]).
- The far-right extremists that have historically promoted that catchphrase, such as the KKK, have sought to divide people based on race, religion and nationality.
- When used today, the term "America First" is often meant to imply that the U.S. government is somehow putting foreign interests ahead of those U.S. citizens in trade deals — which is completely untrue.
- U.S. trade policy has never put people abroad ahead of American workers. Instead, it has put the interests of big corporations ahead of working people both at home and abroad.
- The solution to job offshoring and wage suppression isn't to further prioritize the interests of American businesses, CEOs and billionaires when rewriting trade agreements. Those Americans' interests have always come first.
- Instead, we should put working families' interests first by demanding that trade deals force companies to adhere to strong worker rights standards across borders. By lifting standards abroad, we can take eliminate corporations' incentive to offshore jobs, while creating stronger markets for U.S.-made products and helping working people abroad help themselves, which is the right thing to do.
- It's time to end divisive trade rhetoric, and start promoting policies that really help working [STATENAMEIANS].

Potential Talking Points on Anti-China Hate:

- The unjust actions of foreign governments deserve to be criticized, but that shouldn't be done in a way that smears entire nationalities nor ignores questionable actions by our own

government. I feel [NAME] crosses that line in [HIS/HER/THEIR] [ARTICLE/OPED] “[TITLE],” ([DATE]).

- Chinese labor and human rights activists working to defend themselves against [LIST SPECIFIC ABUSE FROM ARTICLE or “ABUSES BY THEIR GOVERNMENT AND EMPLOYERS”] deserve our support.
- When [NAME] raises this issue, however, [HE/SHE/THEY] does so in a Sinophobic way that lumps all Chinese people together and that threatens to fan increased hatred and violence against Chinese Americans and other Asian Americans here in [STATE/CITY].
- I’m sick of hypocritical, right-wing voices shouting about “China” to score political points, and then backing policies like former President Trump’s 2020 U.S.-China trade deal, which not only failed to mention labor rights and human rights abuses in China, but actually included provisions like investor and intellectual property protections designed to help U.S. corporations that move jobs to China.
- Instead of more tough-talking bluster with thinly-veiled appeals to racism, [STATE], the country and the world need trade policies that are rooted in cross-border solidarity and designed to lift global labor and environmental standards

Join the Trade Justice Rapid Response Team

We need your help pushing back against divisive trade rhetoric that pits working people in the U.S. against workers in other countries and covers up the realities of how corporate-driven trade agreements hurt working people everywhere.

Please join the Trade Justice Rapid Response Team to call out harmful trade propaganda and promote fair trade policy alternatives that are rooted in cross-border worker solidarity rather than hate. Examples of the team's work include:

- Submitting Letters to the Editor challenging scapegoating and xenophobia in the trade policy debate;
- Sharing social media memes and messages that promote trade justice alternatives;
- Receiving factsheets and other print materials to distribute at meetings, conferences and elsewhere; and
- Participating in coordinating meetings with activists across the country.

Once you sign up, a member of the Trade Justice team will reach out to you to help onboard

you. If you have any questions in the meantime, please email Clayton Tucker at clayton@tradejustideedfund.org.

SIGN UP AT: <http://tinyurl.com/tradejusticerapidresponse>