



PHOTO BY NORLAM OLIVO/GIRLIE ACTION MEDIA

Joey La Neve DeFrancesco, far left, and singer Victoria Ruiz, far right, with fellow Downtown Boys bandmates, past and present. The punk artists are performing in Portland with the Rock Against the TPP event Aug. 20.

## Punk's political powerhouse

*Downtown Boys don't mince words when it comes to TPP*

**BY JASON MEKKUM**  
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

**P**unk is politics, and in that game, the band Downtown Boys leaves nothing on the table. No one walks out of its shows without a chance at enlightenment – on workers' rights, police accountability and punitive immigration policies, among other issues. And with singer Victoria Ruiz on the mic, Downtown Boys have no trouble getting their message across loud and clear – in English and Spanish – before, during and after their shows.

On Aug. 20, the Providence, R.I., band will be in Portland performing with Rock Against the TPP, the traveling "education concert" calling for the defeat of the Trans-Pacific Partnership. The touring event seems like a perfect fit for band members Ruiz, Joey La Neve DeFrancesco, Norlan Olivo and Mary Regalado. The TPP, with its massive labor, environmental and human rights implications, merges multiple issues that have been woven into Downtown Boys' sax punk party sound for years.

Fresh from a Rock Against the TPP event in Denver, Ruiz and DeFrancesco spoke with Street Roots about their passion for the project and the issues. But first, given that their recent album is titled "Full Communist," we were curious: Are they or aren't they?

**Joey La Neve DeFrancesco:**

When we're talking about communism we're not talking about a 20th century, state imagination of top-down communism. It's more of a small "c" communism that is creating a more participatory, democratic alternative to the kind of global capitalism that the TPP is putting into place. The idea is the opposite of full-on capitalism and what that means to be ruled by a complete corporate oligarchy and that is something the TPP is certainly pushing us toward. It's literally putting control of state governments across the world in the hands of corporations which are inherently undemocratic. I think at the moment, fighting that idea is where our heads are at.

**Jason Mekkum:** *You guys are known for heavy political messages in your music. What specifically about this compelled you get involved in this event?*

**Victoria Ruiz:** I think that a lot of our stage banter and what we tend to talk about is fighting institutional racism and bringing together this idea that we're never going to have worker justice until we have racial justice. And that's part of this same movement against oppression. (The TPP) is planting the seeds of fascism in the United States.

**J.M.:** *Have you had any issues with the fact that not a lot of people are familiar with the TPP? Is it challenging to get your listeners*

*concerned?*

**J.D.:** It's designed from the beginning to be secret and hard to understand. It was negotiated completely in secret and agreed upon before even being revealed to the citizens of any of these countries. And now all that's left to happen is this up or down vote. It can't be changed further at this point. People kept saying at the rally in Denver – right or left, people universally for one reason or another opposed this deal for how much power it concedes to the people at the very top. When people learn about the details of it they are almost universally against it. But it is just completely shrouded in secrecy.

Only about six of 30 sections of the deal have anything to do with trade. You can talk about unfair trade policies and that's a huge part of this as well, but then all of these other sections are entirely about getting corporations the power to deregulate labor laws, environmental laws, about strengthening copyright laws that mostly serve corporate interests. And giving pharmaceutical companies these monopoly rights over drugs, which is going to make it harder for people all over the world – particularly in the Third World – from getting HIV drugs, from getting cheap drugs for all sorts of illnesses, which at this point shouldn't be an issue any

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## Who's down with TPP?

*How Oregon's office holders plan to vote*

**I**f the Obama administration can build enough support for the Trans-Pacific Partnership, the trade deal will come to a vote this fall. But many representatives claim they are still undecided.

Lori Wallach, director of Public Citizens' Global Trade Watch, said it is already likely the administration will find enough support in the U.S. Senate to pass the deal, it still has work to do in the House. All that's needed is a simple majority in both the U.S. House and Senate.

On August 4, Oregon Gov. Kate Brown came out in support of the TPP with an announcement that drew criticism from local labor unions.

"Oregon's unions continue to stand united in our opposition to the TPP, because it's a bad deal for working people in our state," wrote Oregon AFL-CIO President Tom Chamberlain in response to Brown's announcement.

Many of Oregon's representatives who say they are undecided on the controversial trade deal also voted in favor of Fast Track, which was written to expedite the passage of TPP through Congress. Trade deal watchdog groups have used votes in favor of Fast Track as an indicator of who is likely to also vote in favor of the TPP.

Here's a rundown of where Oregon representatives stand, along with contact information:

### Oregon's U.S. Representatives

**Suzanne Bonamici** (D-District 1)  
Position on TPP: **Undecided**  
Vote on Fast Track: Yes  
Email her at [bonamici.house.gov](mailto:bonamici.house.gov)  
Phone: 503-469-6010

**Greg Walden** (R-District 2)  
Position on TPP: **Likely in favor**  
Vote on Fast Track: Yes  
(His office did not respond with his current standing, but he has expressed support of the deal in the past.)  
Email him at [walden.house.gov](mailto:walden.house.gov)  
Phone: 202-225-6730

**Earl Blumenauer** (D-District 3)  
Position on TPP: **Undecided**  
Vote on Fast Track: Yes  
Email him at [blumenauer.house.gov](mailto:blumenauer.house.gov)  
Phone: 503-231-2300

**Peter Defazio** (D-District 4)  
Position on TPP: **Opposed**  
Vote on Fast Track: No  
Email him at [defazio.house.gov](mailto:defazio.house.gov)  
Phone: 202-225-6416

**Kurt Schrader** (D-District 5)  
Position on TPP: **Supportive**, but still reviewing the bill  
Vote on Fast Track: Yes  
Email him at [schrader.house.gov](mailto:schrader.house.gov)  
Phone: 202-225-5699

### Oregon's U.S. Senators

**Ron Wyden** (D)  
Position on TPP: **Undecided**  
Vote on Fast Track: Yes  
Email him at [wyden.senate.gov](mailto:wyden.senate.gov)  
Phone: 503-326-7525

**Jeff Merkley** (D)  
Position on TPP: **Opposed**  
Vote on Fast Track: No  
Email: [merkley.senate.gov](mailto:merkley.senate.gov)  
Phone: 503-326-3386

- By Emily Green