

Principles of The Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action and Integration, and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)

Adopted October 19, 2000 at the BAMN mass meeting and conference, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. (115 votes for, 0 against, 1 abstaining)

1. BAMN is a mass, democratic, integrated, national organization dedicated to building a new mass civil rights movement to defend affirmative action, integration, and the other gains of the civil rights movement of the 1960s and to advance the struggle for equality in American society *by any means necessary*.
2. BAMN will consist of local BAMN groups, other independent organizations that choose to affiliate or otherwise associate themselves with BAMN, and individuals who declare their support for BAMN's principles and express this support in action consistent with these principles.

BAMN groups will include independent community, labor, campus, high-school, middle-school, youth, and other political and activist organizations that endorse the principles of BAMN, conduct their internal business democratically, and commit themselves in action to the achievement of BAMN's aims.
3. BAMN is committed to making real America's founding declaration that "all men are created equal." Real equality of rights and opportunities for women and for disadvantaged black, Latina/o, Native American, Asian Pacific American, Arab American, and other minorities requires *active, positive measures*, a national policy of *affirmative action*. American society can overcome its fundamental inequalities only if *positive measures* are taken to transform it into what it should be.
4. BAMN is committed to making real the ideal of "government of the people, by the people, for the people." But democracy, too, must be a sham as long as the fundamental inequalities of poverty, racism, and sexism deform the relations of political power along with access to educational and economic opportunities. Here again, America can only become what it should be through a national policy of *affirmative action*.
5. BAMN recognizes that history has made clear that the *positive measures, the affirmative action* necessary to achieve genuine equality and real democracy will require the victory of the struggles of a new, independent integrated civil rights movement committed to fight for these aims *by any means necessary*. As Americans committed to saving our society from the evils of racism and sexism, we understand that racism and sexism are so deeply a part of the structure and institutions of American society that only the growing power of a new mass movement can uproot them.
6. BAMN defends the integration plans that were the decisive first fruit of the previous generation of civil rights struggles. We recognize that the attack on affirmative action has been accompanied by a less well publicized but even more dangerous series of right-wing attacks on integration plans in American public schools, even where these plans have been most successful and have had the widespread support of minority and white parents and students alike.
7. BAMN sees the attack on affirmative action and integration—policies that in practice have benefited people of both sexes and all races—as a fundamental attack on the democratic character of American society itself.

This is true, in the first place, because of the intrinsic importance of the actual policies under attack as very modest steps in the direction of equality of opportunities for women and disadvantaged minorities. But it is also true because the victory of the opponents of affirmative action and integration will set the stage for a broader and deeper attack not only on the gains of the past civil rights movement but on the democratic rights won through the mass struggles of the labor movement of the 1930s and the youth, women's, and lesbian/gay movements of the 1960s and 1970s.
8. BAMN will employ whatever means are necessary to oppose and defeat these attacks on the democratic and egalitarian aspirations and struggles of our people. Specifically, BAMN will employ the methods of independent mass organizing and struggle, of mass education and action, of democratic discussion and decision-making, of telling the truth and only the truth, of rooting our fights in the courts or in elections in the growing movement on the streets, of building the leadership of the disenfranchised and oppressed.
9. BAMN will be independent of the Democrats and Republicans and of governments and school and university administrations. In any elections, BAMN

will consider supporting only those candidates, slates, and parties whose support for affirmative action and the struggle of the new movement for equality is explicit and unequivocal.

10. Confident in the capacity of a new movement to learn, grow, fight, and win, BAMN rejects cynicism and despair.
11. BAMN rejects the principle of "separate but equal" as one of the great lies of American history. We will oppose every measure aimed at the resegregation of American society.
12. BAMN rejects biological determinism and its pseudo-scientific ideological explanations of the inequalities of modern society.
13. BAMN rejects all claims that the inequalities of race and gender and the oppression of racism and sexism can be adequately explained as natural or inevitable consequences of human nature, original sin, biological destiny, or the supposed deficiencies of various ethnic cultures.

The inequalities of race and gender in American society are a result of the actual history of that society. Racism and sexism are expressions of the actual inequalities of wealth, power, and status that characterize the society that have developed through that history. Our aim should be to understand that history in order to end those unequal relations of power and privilege, not to invent theories to rationalize passive submission.
14. BAMN will expose the falsehoods of the baseless and arrogant attempts to use standardized tests to define merit or intelligence or human dignity. We recognize that such inevitably biased tests correlate most strongly, not with any question of merit, but with the relative privileges or disadvantages of race and socioeconomic status and amount to a means of rationalizing preferences for certain racial and class privileges.
15. BAMN stands proudly in the tradition of the great abolitionist, civil rights, and antiracist movements of the past, critically studying, learning from, and developing the lessons of the struggles of our heroic forebears. We look especially to the towering figure of Frederick Douglass ("If there is no struggle there is no progress"), and, as representative leaders of the 1960s, Martin Luther King ("The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundations of our nation until the bright day

of justice emerges"), and Malcolm X ("action on all fronts by whatever means necessary").

16. BAMN will base itself on the new movement as it develops, viewing its tasks from the standpoint of the oppressed and the poor, not the privileged elite. While maintaining its independence and not shirking the duty of leadership or yielding the right of criticism and the obligation to tell the truth, BAMN will work hard to build any alliance that can help make the new, independent movement broader and more powerful.
17. BAMN defends the rights and dignity of immigrants against the divisive, racist, and chauvinist attacks that have deformed American political life over and over again throughout our nation's history.
18. BAMN sees itself as part of a reawakening international mass movement against racism and fascism and for equal rights and opportunities. We will develop links with antiracist and proequality movements outside the US in order to help where we can and in order to learn from the struggles of our sisters and brothers in other nations.
19. BAMN will fight for the democratic election of leaders of movement bodies; for the direct accountability of all leaders to the new movement; and for democratic discussion and decision-making in all the meetings and bodies of the new movement.
20. BAMN will be an organization in which strong women leaders play a fully equal role in all its work. BAMN will be built by women and male leaders inspired by the examples of the heroic women leaders of the abolitionist and civil rights movements—courageous fighters like Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth, Rosa Parks, Ella Baker and Fanny Lou Hamer. BAMN will fight for the equal leadership role of women in the new mass movement.
21. BAMN will be an organization in which black, Latina/o, Native American, Asian Pacific American, Arab American, and other minority leaders play a full and prominent role. We will fight for full integration of the leadership of the new movement.
22. In any new movement, youth must play a decisive role. BAMN will be an organization of idealistic and brave youth, fighting for a future of genuine equality and justice for all.