

Liberator

JOURNAL FOR THE EMERGING NEW CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

A Brief Balance Sheet of the National Struggle

The struggle over affirmative action will be the defining question of domestic social policy in America over the next period. This fight—*win or lose*—will be a turning point for our whole society.

This attack is the first full-fledged attempt to reverse a policy that is fundamental to the gains of the Civil Rights Movement. It is a direct attack on the progress toward integration and equality won through the hard struggles of black people as well as other minorities. It also aims at a reversal of the historically associated progress in the social position of women of all races.

We *can* and *must* defeat this attack.

Since the publication of *Liberator 2*, there have been some positive developments around the country that bear consideration. There are some small, but very important signs favoring the defense of affirmative action. These changes open up opportunities for the movement which refute the notion—all too popular amongst mainstream progressive forces—that affirmative action is all but dead.

Steps Forward

Belatedly, more of the liberal intellectual elite has taken a more forceful stand in support of affirmative action. For the movement to defend affirmative action this is very important. It indicates that the comparatively small steps that the movement has taken so far have had a far-reaching impact.

Professors in the University of California system have called a two-day walk-out in defense of affirmative action on October 21st and 22nd. This is a development of great moment. Having the professors of the institutions that are on the front lines of the fight taking a bolder stand can do a great deal to advance the struggle nationally. Similarly, the fact that professors at the University of Michigan are circulating a petition in support of affirmative action indicates important progress.

On October 5th, the first day of the

new term of the US Supreme Court, the NAACP held a 1,000 person demonstration outside the Court to protest the Justices' failure to hire black and other minority law clerks (there have been only 7 black law clerks out of the 428 hired by the sitting Justices since 1972). The demonstration was in effect demanding that the nine Justices who will make the ultimate legal decision on affirmative action, stop discriminating and start implementing their own affirmative action policy. Implicitly this demonstration called attention to the racist and reactionary character of the current Court.

The publication of *The Shape of the River*, a book that makes a very narrow but well researched case for affirmative action in elite colleges and universities, has been hailed as the beginning of a pro-affirmative action counteroffensive by a significant portion of the mainstream media. The reviews of the book in various newspaper editorials, particularly *The New York Times*, indicate that there is something of a counteroffensive starting to materialize among the liberal "opinion-makers".

In Michigan, the much-publicized attempt by right-wing Republican state representative Deborah Whyman to get an anti-affirmative action proposition on the ballot failed miserably for lack of signatures. The leadership of the Republican Party in Michigan correctly estimated that the issue was too volatile to serve as racist demagoguery without real danger of backfiring on the party as a whole. As a result, they did not throw their weight, including their money, behind it. Whyman was rewarded for her efforts by losing the Republican nomination in the primary election in August.

In Washington state, the Proposition-209-style "Initiative 200" has finally gotten some high profile opposition. Large-scale capital, including Boeing, Microsoft, and Hewlett-Packard, has begun to put money into the "NO on 200" campaign

A Brief Balance Sheet of the National Struggle

1

Lessons from the Fight

3

BAMN's Fight to Admit the 800 at UC Berkeley

5

Myth → Fact

6

"By any means necessary..."

8

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 - "NATIONAL"]

BAMN'S PROGRAM

1. Defend affirmative action! No resegregation of higher education!
2. Stop the implementation of the racist, sexist Proposition 209 in California.
3. Force the University of California Regents to rescind their vote to destroy affirmative action.
4. Build mass, militant actions to stop the University of California, University of Michigan and other university administrations from implementing any anti-affirmative action policy in employment and/or admissions.
5. Stop the implementation of racist anti-immigrant Proposition 187 in California.
6. Build a mass, militant, integrated, independent movement that uses any means necessary, including education, rallies, marches, building occupations and strikes to defend affirmative action, win our demands and to fight for equality in American society.
7. Use democracy to build the movement. Hold open mass meetings and conferences, vote on strategies and tactics, and elect a steering committee accountable to the members of the Coalition.
8. Build a democratic statewide coalition that is financially and in every way independent of the Regents, University of California, University of Michigan and other administrations and government. Open it up to anti-racist activists and organizations from high schools, community colleges, state universities, unions, black, Latino and other minority organizations, anti-racist groups, women's rights groups, lesbian/gay organizations, etc.

"We want to destroy the [Ku Klux] Klan. Disband it, destroy it, erase it from this earth. And we can do it. You've been in the army. They taught you all those tricks. Well, use them."

-Malcolm X

In Harlem on February 15th, 1965,
one week before his death

"Even Malcolm X came around to pacifism."

-Peter Romer-Friedman

Michigan Daily
September 8, 1998

"During the lifetime of great revolutionaries, the oppressing classes constantly hounded them, received their theories with the most savage malice, the most furious hatred and the most unscrupulous campaigns of lies and slander. After their death, attempts are made to convert them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to say, and to hallow their names to a certain extent for the "consolation" of the oppressed classes and with the object of duping the latter, while at the same time robbing the revolutionary theory of its substance, blunting its revolutionary edge and vulgarizing it."

- V.I. Lenin, *State & Revolution*

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of *Liberator* is to defend affirmative action. *Liberator* rejects the apologetic, tepid tone and language and the half-stepping, unpersuasive, tokenist argumentation of the reluctant, moderate "defenders" of affirmative action. A real defense of affirmative action requires a far-reaching and forceful system of arguments and a searching criticism of the existing order of things.

Liberator seeks to be the voice of a new, radical civil rights movement.

Liberator will serve as a forum for the clarification of the key questions that arise in the course of the struggle to defend affirmative action.

Liberator will provide an ideological pole and weapon for those involved in the fight to defend affirmative action and to win equality in American society.

The name *Liberator* is taken from the Abolitionist paper of William Lloyd Garrison that published from 1831 through the Civil War. During the 1840's, Frederic Douglass was a regular contributor. In his autobiography, *My Bondage and My Freedom*, he writes: "*The Liberator* was a paper after my own heart. It detested slavery—exposed hypocrisy and wickedness in high places—made no truce with the traffickers in the bodies and soul of men; it preached human brotherhood, denounced oppression, and with all the solemnity of God's word, demanded the complete emancipation of my race. I not only liked—I *loved* this paper..."

Lessons from the Fight

Prospects & Balance Sheet of the Struggle at the University of Michigan

The eyes of the nation are on the fight at the University of Michigan. The lawsuits that seek to eliminate affirmative action in admissions at the College of Literature, Science and the Arts and the U of M Law School have placed a great responsibility on the shoulders of students here. With that responsibility comes a prodigious opportunity.

The movement to defend affirmative action at U of M can make the most of these opportunities if we understand four things: the limitations of our allies, the strength of our enemies, the necessity for our movement to be united and energetic, and the potential of this struggle to grow into a new, mass movement.

The Administration and the Movement

The convergence of the position on affirmative action of the U of M administration and our movement is not simple. The starting point of BAMN's struggle has necessarily been the administration's defense of its affirmative action policies. But the administration's position is conditioned by a series of factors which do not and should not shape the movement's position. Their guiding aim is the stable operation of an important training institution of the current system, whereas the movement's guiding aim is achieving equality.

Mirroring the society as a whole, the affirmative action policies at U of M and other educational institutions were imposed on the administration by the popular will of students. The policies that secured some measure of integration have been *student polices* that administrations conceded.

At U of M, affirmative action policies were won through mass, militant black student struggle. The first Black Action Movement strike in March of 1970, shut down the campus until the administration agreed to expand black enrollment to 10%—a promise the U of M administration has not kept *to this day*. This action drew broad support from students, workers and faculty. The Michigan Mandate, U of M's undergraduate affirmative action policy, was the direct consequence of the BAM III actions in 1987. Integration was *forced* on the U of M administration by the movement.

On the one hand, farsighted administrators are seeking to avoid a repetition of this type of volatile, "disruptive" struggle, just as farsighted government policy-makers have opposed the attack on affirmative action, not so much out of genuine commitment to social equality, as out of fear of the instability that struggle precipitates. On the other hand,

the movement comprehends that progress is the child of struggle—*especially volatile, "disruptive" struggle*.

The Administration, the Lawsuits & the Struggle

The administration is focused on the legal threat to their admissions policies. As a result they have taken up the superficial, inadequate "diversity" language of the 1978 *Bakke* Supreme Court decision. The administration's legal and public political defense has, up until now, been timid and narrow; it has largely focused on the insufficient claim that "diversity" enriches everyone's educational experience. The U of M administration artificially circumscribes the field of discussion so as to avoid questions of institutionalized racism or sexism or an implied conclusion of far-reaching criticism of K-12 education and American society in general.

To the movement, "diversity", while a positive thing in itself, is tertiary—the real question is one of *equality*. We refuse to be confined to the hollow, tokenist language of the Supreme Court's capricious rulings. For us, broadening the debate to include public education and other, wider social questions has been a central tactical aim; broadening the debate is also a precondition for both an *honest discussion* and *for victory*.

The U of M administration is under a great deal of pressure to weaken its affirmative action policies and it has bowed to that pressure in spite of the fact that it is also defending its admissions policy in court.

At the first sign of a legal threat to affirmative action on the horizon, the U of M administration began to scale back black freshman admissions. Rather than moving in the direction of the 10% black enrollment commitment that the U of M administration made to the Black Action Movement in 1970, they are moving in the opposite direction. According to *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, black freshman enrollment at U of M dropped from 600 students in the fall of 1995 to 400 students in the fall of 1997! Between the fall of 1997 and the fall of 1998 black freshman enrollment dropped substantially (in fact, approximately 17%) according to the *Ann Arbor News*.

The Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action By Any Means Necessary (BAMN), along with 41 current and prospective students of the U of M law school and two other pro-affirmative action coalitions, United for Equality and Affirmative Action and Law Students for Affirmative Action, has attempted to intervene as a defendant in the lawsuit against the U of M law school's admissions policy.

While understanding the historical (and the concrete,

[OVER]

[CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3]

immediate) supremacy of mass social struggle in determining the outcome of the fight, we have taken the question of the legal struggle with the utmost seriousness. Our legal strategy has been aggressive.

We intend to introduce the substantive questions of social inequality into the courtroom. Our aim has been to introduce the mass struggle into the legal proceedings at every moment possible, including starting our first written legal material with the *real* genesis of affirmative action at U of M: the BAM I strike.

Our intention is to picket and fill the courtroom at every opportunity. We want action on all fronts. Our method is to use the legal fight to build the mass struggle and, to the greatest extent possible, to make the legal fight the voice of the mass struggle in the courtroom.

The greater the activity and breadth of the movement, the greater support and pressure there is for the U of M administration to maintain the most rigorous legal defense possible. They are on the same side of the fight over this issue right now, but they are a vacillating and conciliatory ally that must not be relied upon. Their aims and their methods put them on very different ground from the movement.

For this set of reasons, the movement must maintain independence from the administration.

The Birth of a Movement

The struggle to defend affirmative action at U of M last school year developed rapidly. Virtually unprepared for the fight in September 1997, the U of M campus was turned into one of the best-organized campuses by the spring of 1998.

The anti-affirmative action lawsuits initiated by the so-called Center for Individual Rights (a right-wing, racist Washington, DC-based law firm) served as a wake-up call to the student body by turning U of M into a battleground. BAMN worked very hard to organize and prepare the U of M campus for the defense of affirmative action. The first affirmative action forum in September 1997 was attended by 50 people: five months later, the February 24th National Day of Action drew the participation of a thousand students, and included a mass rally on the Diag, a several-hour-long sit-in in the fishbowl, and the largest march on the U of M campus in a decade.

In the days and weeks leading up to February 24, student organizations with widely varying political perspectives forged a working relationship. United for Affirmative Action was formed to bring people together from the many organizations that by January and February of 1998 were active in building the movement. The breadth of the impact we've made thus far can largely be attributed to the unity that was built through this process.

On March 18th, 600 students faced off with lead anti-affirmative action demagogue, Ward Connerly. Not to be dissuaded by having nothing of consequence to say, Ward Connerly trotted out some worn-out anecdotes for 10 minutes and was promptly crushed in the Q & A period. Through the course of the evening, as students exposed the weakness and hollowness of the right wing's arguments, the movement gained a new level of self-confidence.

The role U of M played in the success of the February



February 24, 1998 Rally at University of Michigan (Photo: Michigan Daily)

24th National Day of Action set the stage for a second nationwide action of even greater scope. Students in New York and New Jersey initiated the second National Day of Action on April 1st. In response to BAMN's taking up and spreading this call, the April 1st action drew the participation of over 70 campuses across the country, with actions ranging from rallies, marches and strikes to forums, speakouts and teach-ins. This was the first real nationally coordinated event of the movement to defend affirmative action, and set a strong national precedent for the movement.

Enormous progress has been made at U of M and nationally on changing the terms of debate of affirmative action. One year ago the opponents of affirmative action had successfully framed the debate in terms designed to obscure the substance of the questions at hand. One year

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 7 - "U OF M"]

BAMN's Fight to Admit the 800 at UC Berkeley

The impact of the outlawing of affirmative action at UC Berkeley is now clear. In the first post-Proposition 209 undergraduate admissions, black admissions for fall semester 1998 plummeted 65%. Chicano and Native American admissions dropped 58% and 61%, respectively. Among those who were denied admission were 808 black, Chicano, Latino and Native American students who had at least a 4.0 GPA and an average SAT score of 1170.

BAMN has recognized that fighting for the admission of these 808 students is an important part of the strategy that can defeat the attack on affirmative action.

Meaning of the Fight

The rejection of the 808 students is incompatible with all notions of fairness and equality. They exemplify who and what the fight over affirmative action is really about. The movement to defend affirmative action must fight for their admission; winning this fight can play an important role in the defense.

University admissions are a roundly subjective process that reflect and perpetuate an array of discriminatory practices. Affirmative action is the only effective pressure against an admissions policy that reflects *and even amplifies* the racist and elitist patterns in the society.

Racist inequality and segregation throughout the society and within the University's admissions policy itself combine to deny equal educational opportunities to blacks, Chicanos, and other minorities, no matter how high their grades and test scores, no matter how much mentoring, tutoring and outreach they receive. As soon as Proposition 209 had outlawed affirmative action, the pressure on the admissions process to counter the racist segregation and inequality that pervade this society was eliminated. The result has been an admissions process that more clearly reflects, not merit, but privilege and inequality in society at large.

The right wing's arguments against affirmative action—that it is a handout for “unqualified minorities”, that it is no longer necessary, etc.—are exposed as lies in the face of the rejection of these 808 minority students from UC Berkeley this fall. Even according to the biased and ill-conceived standards by which the University measures applicants, these students outshine hundreds of white students who were admitted. It is incontestable that these students are eminently qualified, talented, and deserving of admission to the University.

Backsliding and Evasion from the Administration

Making matters worse, in the same year that UC Berkeley acquiesced to Proposition 209 and the Regents decision, they strengthened the elitist, racist bias of their admissions process by lifting the 4.0 GPA cap.

Lifting the 4.0 GPA cap means allowing honors and advanced placement classes to boost a student's grade above an “A” average. Doing this enables applicants who attend wealthier, better equipped high schools to be considered with GPAs as high as 5.0. This puts more privileged students at *an even greater advantage* over against those students who are denied the *opportunity* to compete for these higher grades *by the absence of course offerings in underfunded schools*. The University thereby makes it virtually impossible for many black and Latino youth—as well as many working-class and poor white and Asian youth who attend poorly funded high schools—to compete effectively with more privileged applicants.

Berkeley continues to give preferences to applicants who have connections to alumni, politicians, and big donors. Now they give preferences to applicants from schools considered to be especially “rigorous” as well—in other words, elite schools attended disproportionately by white, wealthy students.

Over the past three years, since the July 1995 Regents' decision, the UC administration concocted various schemes to make the racist attack on affirmative action easier to swallow. They set up special programs, financed through the Chancellor's special “discretionary fund”, to mentor and recruit minority high school students. A part of the movement to defend affirmative action wrongly supported these half-step measures, one of the central aims of which was to placate and quiet the movement. BAMN consistently exposed the real nature of these programs. The Fall 1998 admissions statistics have exposed once and for all the utter inadequacy of these “alternative measures”.

The UC Berkeley administration's only response to the rejection of the 800 has been to say that numerous white and Asian students with high scores were rejected as well. This “defense” of their policy only sidesteps the issue of the racist inequality reflected in the composition of the admitted class—that this year's freshman class has historically low numbers of black, Chicano, and Native

“Affirmative action is the only effective pressure against an admissions policy that reflects *and even amplifies* the racist and elitist patterns in the society.”

[OVER]

American students. The question of qualified white and Asian students being denied admission is bound up with the declining number of total admissions and the general “downsizing” of educational opportunity, whereas the issue of the rejection of qualified under-represented minorities is bound up specifically with racist inequality and segregation in the society and in the UC admissions system.

The right wing wants white people, and even Asian-Americans, to believe that they will benefit from an end to affirmative action. But in actual fact, there was no significant change in the numbers of whites and Asians admitted to UC Berkeley this year. The thousands of white and Asian students who were denied admission can only gain by being on the side of the struggle to defend affirmative action and fighting alongside black and Latino/Chicano youth to make the universities more accessible to everyone.

While blacks, Chicanos, Latinos and Native Americans are 48% of the total number of 18 year olds in California—together they make up only 10.4% of the admitted class to the University of California at Berkeley this fall! To tolerate this vast disparity means to accept a system based on birthright and skin privilege.

We say that the educational institutions must be accountable to the black, Chicano, Latino and Native American communities. The institutions cannot be allowed to discriminate. This is a basic condition for any society that strives toward equality and democracy.

“Admit the 800!” and the Direction of the Movement

BAMN has argued that struggling for the admission of the 808 students is an especially effective way to build the movement to defend affirmative action right now.

The campaign has already won some important victories. Several black and Chicano high school students who were initially denied admission to UC Berkeley have since been admitted, which thereby proves that the University does indeed have the option of admitting these students if it so chooses. In defense of their right to admission, many forces have been stirred to action. The Oakland teachers’ union (Oakland Education Association), the UC-Berkeley student government (ASUC), the Black Student Union, and a number of Berkeley professors have taken up BAMN’s demand to “Admit the 800!”

If the University gave in to our demands to admit the 800, the opponents of affirmative action would have two options before them, both of which would be to our advantage. They could ignore it and send the signal that the attack on affirmative action is unenforceable, clearing the way for open defiance of 209 across the state. Or they could sue the University and thus reopen the question of the legality of Proposition 209. Any ensuing legal battle would put the right wing in the very difficult position of trying to justify the rejection of 808 undeniably deserving black, Chicano, Latino and Native American students. Their racist agenda would be even more thoroughly revealed, and an even larger cross section of California would rally in defense of the 808’s right to admission and in defense of affirmative action.

The Admit the 800 campaign has undertaken to secure the admission of these wholly qualified minority students to UC Berkeley, but it has also done much more. The Admit the 800 campaign has served as a rallying point for the effort to reverse the attack on affirmative action in California. ✖

Myth ➡ Fact

Myth: *Affirmative action should be based on socioeconomic status, not race or sex.*

Fact: First, programs that offset the disadvantages to which poor people of all races are subjected *are not counterposed* to race- and sex-based affirmative action. This is not an argument *against affirmative action*—it is an argument *for expanding the scope of affirmative action*.

For the racists who use the cover of the so-called “merit” argument to advance this proposal is sheer hypocrisy. Poor people of all races tend to do worse on the SAT and other standardized tests—so from the “logic” of their demagoguery, programs that give “preferences” to people of “lower socioeconomic status” would mean that “unqualified poor people” are taking places that “qualified rich people should have gotten”.

This is a hypocritical attempt to conceal the elitist nature of the argument against affirmative action with a dishonest claim to speak in the interest of poor people of all races. The primary reason for the inaccessibility of higher education to poor people is money. The primary obstacle keeping poor white students specifically out of higher education is not the small number of black and other minority students—it’s money. If these racist hypocrites meant what they say, they would be fighting to lower tuition and expand grants and financial aid.

Second, racism and sexism are living factors in today’s society. Middle class and affluent black and other minority people face racism and middle class and affluent women of all races face sexism.

["NATIONAL" - CON'T FROM FRONT]

under the guiding concept that the attack on affirmative action is "bad for business". They fear the instability that will result from the struggle that officially sanctioned segregation will provoke. Initiative 200 may limp through the polls, however, aided, perhaps decisively, by the same intentionally deceptive language as Proposition 209.

In California, on September 15th the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to expand their affirmative action policy on city contract allocation to include consideration of Arab Americans and Native Americans. This action is in direct, conscious defiance of Proposition 209, which is now California law. This opens a new legal offensive against the legitimacy of Prop 209. The San Francisco Board of Supervisors would not have taken that laudable step had it not been for the pressure and support of the movement to defend affirmative action in California.

Signs of a counteroffensive in defense of affirmative action have appeared in the Federal Courts as well.

There are contradictory rulings in the Boston Latin High School case (the Massachusetts District) and the infamous *Hopwood* case (the Fifth Circuit). The Supreme Court will be forced to address the contradictory Federal rulings. They will, however, be no more able to resolve the issue than the *Dred Scott* (1857) decision resolved the question of property in human flesh or than the unanimous *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) decision actually secured equality and integration in public schools. The position of the courts on affirmative action opens up an opportunity for the movement to assert its influence, but in the end, social struggle will decide.

Both the shift to a more outspoken policy on the part of the liberal intellectual elite and the vacillations and divisions in the position of the courts on affirmative action provide some important openings for the movement.

Though by no means certain, an upset defeat for the right wing's attack on affirmative action is now becoming a possibility. If we can capitalize on these opportunities now, we can defeat the right wing's attack and open up the prospect of substantial progressive change in American society. ✕

Hundreds of professors at the University of Michigan Ann Arbor have signed on to the following petition. We urge people organizing for the defense of affirmative action at colleges and universities to initiate similar petition drives.

“As faculty at the University of Michigan, we declare our support for affirmative action. In our experience, affirmative action policies—such as those employed in University of Michigan admissions—are essential in promoting equal access to education, improving the quality of education for all students, and contributing to equality of opportunity in the society at large.”

["U OF M" - CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3]

ago, the mainstream "defenders" of affirmative action could hardly be gotten to utter the term "affirmative action"! The substance of the issue are now better expressed in the terms of debate. The fact that racism and sexism are living factors in today's society has made part of the arduous journey from daily life into the discussion. From the beginning of the fight, BAMN has framed the issue as one of *resegregation*. The fact that the resegregation of higher education is threatened is now quite widely acknowledged.

What we need now at U of M and across the country is for the various progressive student leaderships to form a united front for defense. The historic importance of defending the gains of the Civil Rights Movement provides a great impetus towards unity; with some work, it should be enough to overcome the various leaderships' resistance to struggle and the sectarianism that issues from that resistance. The alliance of campus organizations that are fighting for the defense of affirmative action must be fostered and developed.

Students who participated in the series of actions in defense of affirmative action at U of M over the past year should take pride in what has been accomplished so far: a movement has been initiated, and new leaders are stepping forward to defend the gains secured through great hardship by the generation of fighters that preceded us.

What happens on the U of M campus will resonate throughout the country—*what we do here will be very important*. If we are to win, the movement must take another important step forward. ✕

“By any means necessary...”

The question of equality for minorities and women is central to the character and direction of our society as a whole. No government, no court, no authority, and no popular vote has the right to relegate minorities and women to second-class citizenship—not before the Civil War, not in the 1950’s and 60’s and not now.

We do not accept the “right” of the University of California Regents, the Supreme Court, or any other small group of wealthy political puppets to decide amongst themselves to resegregate the public universities. We do not accept this “right” any more than we think early white Americans had the “right” to enslave black people or colonize a third of Mexico.

We will not bow down before racist segregation and inequality—whether it is “popular” or not.

A ballot initiative in Mississippi in 1963 would have endorsed Jim Crow. That would not have made us any less determined to raze the Jim Crow structure to the ground.

California’s Proposition 209, the anti-affirmative action ballot initiative which was passed with intentionally deceptive language and the lowest voter turnout since the 1920’s, is now law. We say this law must be defied, not only because it was passed by a tiny electoral majority of disproportionately upper and middle class white voters, but even more fundamentally because no popular (or unpopular) mandate has the “right” to enforce racist segregation and inequality.

We declare that we will continue the struggle for equality when necessary even in spite of the law. We will make use of the law when and where we can, but never subordinate our struggle to it.

The means and methods availed to us by the powers-that-be as “legitimate” are not sufficient for the defense of affirmative action—they would not have been sufficient to take this society forward at any of its most important turning points. Electoral efforts and litigation alone will no more be able to successfully defend affirmative action now than they would have been capable of winning affirmative action in the first place.



Malcolm X

We recognize the historical fact that gains toward equality for minorities and women, as well as historical progress generally, have come only as the consequence of mass social struggle. Emancipation from slavery required the bloodiest war of this nation’s history. Winning voting rights, the right to organize unions, desegregation, bilingual education, abortion rights, affirmative action—all have required mass movements in the streets and the threat of social upheaval.

The American legal and political system is as plagued with inequality and favoritism for the privileged as the society on which it rests. The existing government is a structure in the service of the elite; wealth and the political power that flows from it dominate American law and policy.

Injustices such as these lead us, as they led Malcolm X, to the conclusion that democracy is “nothing but disguised hypocrisy” and that we need “action on all fronts by whatever means necessary.”

The means that are necessary now to defend affirmative action consist primarily of a new mass, militant, integrated civil rights movement.

Winning is our aim; our methods are determined by what will help the fight to defend affirmative action win. There are those who would tie our hands in the face of this attack by limiting our means and methods to those deemed “legitimate” by the powers that be. The phrase “by any means necessary” says that we will not cede any means that will help us secure victory in the struggle for equality. ✕