

Yearning to Breathe Free: BAMN Declaration on Immigrant Rights

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Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, and Immigrant Rights
And Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)

THE NEW COLOSSUS (1883)

By Emma Lazarus [1849-1887]

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips. "Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!*

1. BAMN today stands for the genuine fulfillment of the principles expressed in Emma Lazarus' famous poem, engraved on a plaque placed more than a century ago in the pedestal of the Statue of Liberty as a declaration defining, not only the meaning of that monument, but the meaning of the American promise of liberty itself.

2. BAMN therefore opposes the entire attack on those principles, an attack that has provoked a new, Latina/o-led civil rights movement fighting for genuine immigrant rights in the America of the twenty-first century.

3. The immigrant-bashers and this new movement for immigrant rights stand, in reality, for two counterposed visions of the future of this country, of what America stands for, what it means to be an American, and what kind of relationship America should have with the rest of the world.

4. The immigrant-bashers hanker after a return to a mythological past of an America to be preserved forever as a "white man's republic." All the attacks on immigrants stem from a conception of the United States as an ivory tower of special privilege. The anti-immigrant ideologues see America as an embattled oasis of wealth and comfort, which must be fortified against the disadvantaged, oppressed, and, especially, nonwhite people of the world. Regardless of the facts, these reactionaries simply assume and assert that the growing presence in this country of large numbers of immigrants

somehow threatens to undermine and topple their imaginary tower of privilege.

The anti-immigrant ideologues are not only profoundly wrong and racist in their perception of the role of immigrants in America today and of the significance of immigration to the nation's future. They are, in reality, profoundly pessimistic about the future of America itself, since they define the nation in terms that both the laws of global economic development and the global struggle for every surviving progressive value of modern humanity have already consigned to the graveyard of history.

5. In glowing contrast, the new civil rights movement, rooted as it is in the struggle of millions of immigrants for hope for their futures and the futures of their families, sees America still as a land of hope for "huddled masses yearning to breathe free." The new movement therefore defines America, not in terms of race, ethnicity, or the protection of power and privilege, but in terms of its historic commitment to the principles of liberty and equality. The aim of this new movement is to lead the nation to make real its claimed commitment to these principles.

6. Throughout American history, the question of immigration has been inseparable from the question of citizenship. The question of citizenship is the question of who constitutes the membership of the community that makes up the American republic.

The United States was founded by immigrants and the descendants of immigrants. The only native Americans were the indigenous peoples conquered and displaced by the generations of European immigrants who had settled the country during the two centuries before the Revolution of 1776 secured national independence.

The future growth of the United States in the decades following the Revolution was inseparable from continuing waves of immigration that endlessly enlarged the national population and economy and diversified and enriched its politics and culture. There never has been a single homogeneous “American” ethnicity or culture, and there never can be. From its earliest origins the American republic has been the creation of a diversity of peoples from a diversity of ethnic and religious backgrounds. What has made this diversity of peoples a single people (“e pluribus unum”) has always been the common project of creating a society attempting to breathe life into the principles of freedom and equality—in Lincoln’s words at Gettysburg, a nation “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” It is this common project, carried out on the common territory of the United States, that made the United States a united nation and created an American people.

In the nation’s earliest years, the privileged and powerful of the rest of the world—the “Old World”—had little reason to leave their own lands and little interest in and a good deal of hostility toward this American project. It was only natural that the waves of immigrants were made up mainly of people seeking refuge from political and religious despotism and persecution and those in urgent need of the economic opportunities afforded by the abundance of nature and the relative freedom and egalitarianism of this new land.

The America created by these waves of immigrants from the Old World is the America celebrated as “Mother of Exiles” by Emma Lazarus in her Statue-of-Liberty poem. For Emma Lazarus was herself a proud descendant of Jewish immigrants who had found in America a haven from the pogroms and legal discrimination against Jews so common in that Old World. And she was also a woman deeply concerned about the continuation of anti-Jewish and other forms of bigotry in her own country and around the world.

It is this America that BAMN and the new immigrant-rights movement celebrate today and defend against the political forces seeking to turn the clock back—and to turn it back to an America that never existed in the first place.

7. Inevitably, throughout American history the question of immigration has been inseparable from the tragic conflicts over race and racism.

The framers of the Constitution did not include any provision that defined citizenship in ethnic, racial, or religious terms. But this did not prevent many citizens in the new republic’s first decades from taking for granted that America was, to all intents and purposes, a white man’s republic—and a Protestant Christian one as well.

The first great challenge to these racialist assumptions arose in the decades before the Civil War, on two fronts.

8. First, as a mass abolitionist movement arose to insist that no modern republic, no democracy, no society based on liberty

could survive on the same national soil as slavery, the argument over slavery became as well an argument over citizenship. The demand for the abolition of slavery inevitably raised the question of what would happen to the former black slaves if the “peculiar institution” was actually eliminated. Then over slavery, as now over immigrant rights, the nation’s political leadership was divided. But on the question of citizenship for the former slaves, the official leaders, both of the “major parties” of the time, the entire white political establishment shared a common view: citizenship for black former slaves was inconceivable. The arguments were much the same as the arguments now over citizenship for “illegal aliens.” The suggestion that former black slaves could possibly form a constituent part of the democratic community of the American republic was treated as a species of insanity, not acceptable in polite company, not to be taken seriously—even though everyone knew that the black slave population had contributed their very life’s blood to building the nation, that there could have been no America without their suffering and sacrifice.

Then, as now, the official political debate was sterile, since the most essential truth—that *black people already were and always had been a part of the American national community, an essential part of the real nation*—was excluded from serious discussion.

The reactionaries of the time defended slavery as a necessary evil or a positive good, and therefore regarded the idea of citizenship for black people as a sheer absurdity. The “moderates” and “liberals” of the time claimed to oppose slavery, but regarded the idea of citizenship for former black slaves with the same unreasoning horror as the reactionaries. Freed slaves would have to be shipped (“colonized”) somewhere else.

But from outside the “two major parties,” the political establishment, and what the journalists and pundits at the time treated as “respectable opinion,” rose voices insisting on the essential truth. It was from the best leaders of the abolitionist movement, including decisively the American free black communities themselves, that the demand went out that, once freed, the former black slaves had to be citizens.

From a deep conviction of the essential unity of the human species and a deep understanding of the democratic claims of their own society, abolitionists like William Lloyd Garrison and Frederick Douglass forged the demand for *full citizenship rights for all people*, including former slaves, with no racial or ethnic qualifications to be permitted. It was this demand, even more than the demand for the immediate abolition of slavery, that made the abolitionists at first a scandal to “respectable people,” that made the abolitionists the intransigent radicals of their day, apparently universally repudiated and maligned, but in reality the secret conscious force driving history forward on the basis of the truth.

9. The second front in the first great battle over the question of citizenship ran parallel with the struggle over slavery and citizenship rights for free black people. By the 1840s Irish and German Catholics swelled the wave of immigration to the U.S. An anti-Catholic movement arose, declaring the poor Irish laborers fleeing famine and poverty to be a dangerous class, by nature criminals and drunkards, and

committed to the “alien religion” of Roman Catholicism. The anti-Catholic ideologues declared Catholicism itself to be incompatible with democracy, much as right-wing ideologues today declare Islam to be incompatible with democracy and modern life. The religious bigots of the day denounced the Irish and German Catholic immigrants as a dire threat to the survival of democratic institutions. Nor was the religious demagoguery merely the work of uneducated rabble rousers. Then as now certain members of the educated elite joined in to give religious prejudice an aura of intellectual respectability.

At the bottom of the economic ladder in the growing industrial and commercial centers of the North, free black and Irish laborers found themselves in competition for the same jobs and other opportunities. It was all too easy for the rich and powerful of the time to pit the two groups against each other in conflicts, sometimes violent, tinged on the two sides with religious and racial bigotry.

Northern Democrats, allied to the Southern slavocracy, tried to enlist the new Irish immigrants behind their program of preserving slavery, using white-racist appeals to convince the poor Irish that their problem was poor black people, not the alliance of the “lords of the lash [the Southern slaveowners] and the lords of the loom [the big Northern textile manufacturers]” condemned by abolitionists like Charles Sumner. Certain leaders of the other “major party” of the 1840s, the Whigs, in turn, tried to enlist both white and black antislavery people in a Protestant crusade against Irish Catholics, as if poor Irish immigrants were the bedrock of support for a slave system with which they had nothing in common.

In the mid 1850s, the first mass anti-immigrant organization developed, popularly called and known to later history as the “Know Nothings.” Officially founded as a secret Order of the Star Spangled Banner, the Know Nothings presented themselves as the true defenders of “Americanism” against the new wave of immigrants and eventually adopted the name “American Party” for their electoral efforts.

In the South, the Know Nothings’ “Americanism” consisted largely of support for “national unity” through promoting Northern acceptance of the preservation of Southern slavery. Its “nativism” was limited mainly to defense of the “native” Southern institution of slavery against the “extremism” of Northern abolitionists and a certain promotion of “native-born” over immigrant Americans. Anti-Catholicism fell into the background.

It was in the North, where increasingly massive and radical opposition to slavery was transforming all political life, that Know Nothingism swelled to mass proportions. In one of the strangest episodes in American political history, northern Know Nothings attempted to combine strident opposition to slavery with vicious appeals to the anti-Catholic paranoia of many American Protestants. Despite the relative popularity of this perverse combination, even Know Nothings could not oppose immigration as such. Immigration was too obviously a fundamental necessity of America’s past and future. Rather, like today’s immigrant bashers, the northern Know Nothings demanded draconian extensions in the time immigrants had to reside in the U.S. and the creation of more and more onerous obstacles to be surmounted before immigrants could become

citizens. A twenty-one-year waiting period was a popular Know Nothing proposal.

In essence, this first anti-immigrant movement was an attempt to divert rising mass opposition to slavery with an appeal to the paranoid, scapegoating, reactionary, bigoted side of American political life. This appeal of northern Know Nothingism boiled down to a call on the American people to “blame immigrants for your problems.” At the same time, the vanguard abolitionist voices appealed to the most democratic, progressive, and humane side of America, rejecting racism, immigrant-bashing, and anti-Catholic bigotry alike. Yet the political confusion of this time of radical transition is seen in the fact that many anti-slavery leaders first gained prominence and political office running as Know Nothings.

This first anti-immigrant movement failed. Within just two years, the appeal of the Know Nothings’ immigrant-bashing and anti-Catholicism gave way to the overriding imperative of resolving the question of slavery. When northern Know Nothing leaders attempted to conciliate the southern Know Nothings on the issue of slavery, the party lost its mass base in the North and joined in the pattern of split and collapse undermining the national viability of the Democrats and Whigs. A new party, the antislavery Republican Party, making few or no concessions to the Know Nothing movement’s anti-immigrant politics and anti-Catholic bigotry, rose in its place to mobilize the people of the North on the basis of their best traditions, driven forward by the intransigent commitment to principle of the abolitionist vanguard.

10. These twin struggles over the American citizenship were resolved on the battlefields of the Civil War. Irish Catholic immigrants flooded into the Union army and fought and died with the greatest possible courage in defense of the Union and democratic principles. And, as the war became undeniably a war for the abolition of slavery as well, Irish immigrants fought side by side heroically with other Americans to stamp out slavery. Just as the black regiments created the conditions to achieve citizenship for black former slaves, so the Irish Union soldiers put to rest the notion that Catholic immigrants were somehow enemies of American democracy. Although the heroism of black and Irish soldiers in the Union army did not end discrimination and racism in the United States, it did resolve the two struggles over the definition of citizenship. There would be no twenty-one-year waiting periods for Catholic immigrants, no religious or racial qualifications in order to be recognized as a legal member of the American national community.

Emma Lazarus’ poem also expresses the spirit of the understanding of the question of immigration and citizenship that came out of the great struggle for freedom in the Civil War. The “huddled masses yearning to breathe free,” here and abroad, would be welcome here, as citizens. They would not be treated as aliens from abroad to be feared, marginalized, or repelled because of their religion or poverty or aliens within to be “colonized” abroad because of the color of their skin. They would BE the heart of the nation. They would BE its future.

BAMN today stands with the new civil rights movement in declaring THIS vision of American citizenship to be the authentic democratic tradition of the nation—the only genuine “Americanism.”

11. At every turn in American history since the Civil War, the twin temptation of racist and anti-immigrant scapegoating has arisen as a diversion from America's real problems.

From the time of the U.S.-Mexican War, Mexican Americans have faced degrading pressures to alienate themselves from their Mexican heritage, only to find that no amount of "assimilation" would lead to anything more than a second-class citizenship. In the years following the Civil War, the politicians decided that neither the Chinese laborers who built the Transcontinental Railroad nor their countrymen could become citizens. Cheap, backbreaking labor, yes. The rights of citizenship, no. In the first decades of the twentieth century, Jewish and Catholic immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe faced new waves of anti-immigrant hysteria and paranoia. A new Ku Klux Klan arose in the first decades of the twentieth century to terrorize Catholic workers and farmers as well as black Americans. At each of these turns, the mainstream politicians responded, not with a courageous defense of the spirit of Emma Lazarus' democratic vision, but with new laws to create new barriers and quotas, new obstacles to immigration and citizenship.

Yet the reality of the contribution Mexican Americans, Asian Americans, and members of all faith traditions from all corners of the world have made to the nation's life has, over and over again, made the long-range success of the immigrant bashers impossible. Still, hard and painful, sometimes bloody, struggles had to be fought to defeat each new generation of Know Nothings.

Today's immigrant-rights movement has taken up the torch of every progressive struggle of the American past against immigrant bashing and scapegoating, against racism and second-class citizenship, against the racially selective closing of borders and the paranoid hysteria aimed at closing frightened minds. In this sense, grounded in all the best traditions of American history, the "illegal immigrants" marching in the great demonstrations of the new movement are easily better Americans than their hypocritical flag-waving critics and opponents. They are defending what it really means to be an American against the latest generation of Know Nothings.

12. BAMN calls for the full realization of the democratic spirit of the new immigrant-rights movement.

Despite all contrary claims (we live in a period of pervasive political dishonesty), it is obvious that the "debate" about immigration is primarily a matter of Mexican and other Latin American immigration in general and the immigration of Mexican and other Latin American laborers in particular. It is for this reason that the new immigrant-rights movement has been based on a massive mobilization of the nation's Latina/o communities. At the same time, it is important to recognize that the modern anti-immigrant movement is necessarily more "diverse," more flexible, more improvisatory, and more dishonest in the spread and scope of its appeals to chauvinist prejudice than any past anti-immigrant movement. Afro-Caribbean, Asian, Pacific Islander, Middle Eastern, and even many disadvantaged communities of Eastern and Southern Europe are also targets of the immigrant bashers.

It is therefore imperative that the new immigrant-rights movement stand on the high ground of principle, defending all

immigrant groups against discrimination and paranoia. The new Know Nothings can be defeated, but only by a movement that unites and defends every community under attack.

13. It is also imperative that the new immigrant rights movement build on the basis of the achievements and unite with the forces of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Today, neither the Latina/o nor the black communities fighting by themselves can turn back the ongoing tide of racist attacks. But, as sisters and brothers firmly united in mass independent struggle on a principled basis, the Latina/o and black communities cannot be defeated.

Today, as throughout American history, the fight for immigrant rights is inseparable from the struggle for citizenship and civil rights and the struggle for civil rights inseparable from the struggle over immigration and citizenship. The starting point for victory against right-wing attacks must be a broad, united defense of immigrant rights and civil rights by the black and Latina/o communities. The defense of affirmative action and resistance to the myriad policies aimed at the resegregation of American society must be joined with full support for immigrant rights as the opening program for any new movement if that movement is to have the possibility of victory.

All the efforts of politicians, journalists, and demagogues of all stripes to divide America's black and Latina/o communities against each other must be rejected.

14. There is nothing either accidental or peculiar in the current importance of the issue of immigration in the United States. Immigration is an important question around the world because, economic questions are international questions as the world becomes increasingly an interdependent global economy, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the inequalities of rich and poor nations and peoples continue to divide that global economy in two.

As the giant corporations of all the economically advanced nations increasingly view every country in this global economy as a part of their playing field, masses of capital flow across national borders as if they were mere lines on pieces of paper, in search of the cheapest access to natural resources, the lowest labor costs, and the highest rates of profit. With this swelling flood of capital migrating from nation to nation go jobs and the economic basis of entire communities. National customs and traditions built up over lifetimes rise and fall in the blink of an eye—like water poured from one glass to another, entire economic sectors flow from one side of the world to another, driven by the global operation of the law of profit.

In the United States both major parties hail this constant flow of capital across borders with its everchanging destabilization of the lives of millions of people as the triumph of a new world of globalization under the banner of Free Trade. No one seriously seeks to resist or even regulate it. Under such conditions it is inevitable that millions of ordinary people will have no alternative but to cross national borders in pursuit of jobs and other opportunities tied to the endless flow of these shifting masses of capital. And it is inevitable that in place of old economic sectors shifting abroad, new economic sectors will arise to exploit the search for jobs of new waves of

immigrants. Immigrant workers are not to blame for these changes in the world economy. Where capital is creating jobs, workers must go.

It is also inevitable that the tendency of this immigration will be from poorer countries to richer countries—from Mexico to the United States—from where opportunities are scarcer and poorer to where opportunities are more abundant. As the corporations are driven by the imperative of an economic law to raise profits by reducing expenses, the poor people of the world are driven by a more living and human law to feed themselves and their families and better their lot if possible.

But in mainstream American politics there is only hypocrisy in dealing with this question. Capital flowing across borders is the triumph of Free Trade, and any laws that might get in the way must be swiftly changed. Republicans, Democrats, and the news media all declare the necessity of bringing the law into conformity with the economic realities faced by giant corporations competing in a global economy. Capital must be free to immigrate at will. But as the laws of the nation regarding the immigration of human beings come more and more in conflict with the economic realities of poor peoples' lives, the demand goes up to make the laws even more incompatible with those realities, to criminalize economic reality itself, to make the laws more stupid and inhuman.

Nor need the rich and famous of any land fear much difficulty in acquiring the blessings of American citizenship.

For capital, Open Borders. For poor workers from Mexico, a wall.

15. In the face of this hypocrisy, the new civil rights movement can hardly be moved by appeals to “the law.” The American immigration law is so at odds with reality that words like “legal” and “illegal” have no real, human meaning. Demands to make this law more unreal and more inhuman can only intensify the sense of the illegitimacy of this law on the part of those it most concerns and breed disrespect for the lawmakers who indulge in cruel nonsense.

The new movement will recall that in the United States slavery, too, was once legal, and that in the decade before the Civil War, both Congress and the federal courts attempted to reinforce its legal status. In the realm of immigration, the American legal tradition has been in large part an adventure in attempting to counterpose irrational, unrealistic, and racist laws to realities that eventually, through hard struggle, overwhelmed and forced the law to change. The new immigrant-rights movement stands on the side of the American historical tradition that has, over and over, demanded that the law be changed to reflect reality and the proclaimed democratic principles of the nation. It fights to bring sanity to an irrational legal situation, to change unjust law to a law of justice.

BAMN's understanding of the question of citizenship flows from our understanding of our nation. BAMN rejects all special and exclusive ethnic, racial, and religious definitions of America and of American citizenship—whether explicit or implicit. To be an American is to live and learn and work here, to contribute to the development of the nation's economy and society, to contribute the best of one's own linguistic and cultural legacy to its diverse culture, and to be committed to the American project of making real certain principles of liberty and equality on this national territory. By this rational standard,

the great majority of the millions of “illegal aliens” are already contributing members of our national community and should have that reality recognized in the law by being afforded the right to become citizens now.

16. The language question raised by the modern Know Nothings is merely a diversion—and a racist one—from the real issue. There is no question of a threat to the English language, but there is a racist attack on the Spanish language and on the ability of the American Latinas/os to maintain living links with the historic heritage of their lands of origin.

Throughout American history it has been left to individual Americans to determine in what mix and proportion they wish to keep alive their ties with the land from which they have emigrated or leave that past behind to adapt to their new surroundings. No one today would seriously suggest that Italian Americans must give up all love of Italy in order to be Americans or that Polish Americans must erase all memory of Poland in order to be accepted as American citizens. There is no evidence that today's immigrants from Latin America are unwilling or unable to learn English, any more than has been true of other immigrant groups throughout American history. Within a generation, all non-English-speaking immigrant groups have learned English without special legal or political measures, simply as a matter of economic necessity and social convenience.

But more than this. In today's world of intensified international interdependence, the preservation by immigrants of languages other than English and living links with other cultures is a precious national asset which should be cherished and supported as a matter of national policy. Bilingualism should be counted as a treasure, not stigmatized and attacked.

From this standpoint BAMN opposes the trend of proposals to declare English to have some special “official” status. Despite rhetorical denials, it is obvious that these measures are not aimed at defending English, which is not in any danger. Rather they are part of the attempt to breed hysteria and paranoia toward the nation's Hispanic communities, to make *disrespect* for Spanish an official American policy, and to place needless and irrational obstacles in the way of millions of Hispanic Americans' ability not only to keep Spanish alive but to learn English efficiently and without humiliation.

From this standpoint as well BAMN recognizes the necessity of bilingual school and community programs, condemns the attacks on bilingual education, and demands the restoration of bilingual education where it has been eliminated.

17. Today's Know Nothings seem to believe that, for Americans, ignorance of other peoples' histories and cultures is bliss. BAMN rejects this attitude and all the chauvinism, backwardness, and stupidity that go along with it.

Americans fighting to defend and extend their own liberties can only benefit from the lessons to be learned and the inspiration to be drawn from the history of the Mexican Revolution and the other Latin American revolutionary struggles for liberty, democracy, and social justice. The United States' Latina/o population provides the rest of Americans with an invaluable opportunity to benefit from those historical experiences. Just as people around the world have found

inspiration in the great popular struggles of American history, so all Americans should be happy to have the favor returned. The great popular struggles of Latina/o history should become a part of American history, enriching our collective national self-understanding.

There is no rational argument for hiding from our neighbors behind walls of ignorance we have erected, in reality, against ourselves.

18. Emma Lazarus' poem begins by declaring that the Statue of Liberty is not like "Old World's" great monuments to imperial power and glory:

*Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,
With conquering limbs astride from land to land...*

This monument will be no Colossus of Rhodes, no image of Pharaoh or emperor, or some god conceived in the image of a tyrant, set up to awe and intimidate. The Statue of Liberty, Emma Lazarus declares, will present the image of a "Mother of Exiles," holding aloft a great lamp to light the way to freedom for the "homeless" and "tempest-tost" of the world.

The vision of America summed up in Emma Lazarus' inspiring lines is counterposed to the vision of those political forces today who see America very much as a "brazen giant" whose task is precisely to dominate the world "with conquering limbs astride from land to land."

A new civil rights movement fighting for full rights for immigrants will need a vision of America's role in the world like Emma Lazarus's, not like that of the American neo-imperialists who have dragged the nation into the invasion of Iraq and the bloody occupation that has been its inevitable aftermath. Just as this new movement must fight for the full sisterhood and brotherhood of the peoples who make up American society, so it must stand for a vision of American international relations based on the principle of the sisterhood and brotherhood of all the peoples of the world—not the domination of the world by any "brazen giant," including ourselves.

19. In order to succeed, a new movement for civil rights and immigrant rights must understand its own importance and its own actual and potential power. We must recognize that it is THIS MOVEMENT that delivered a setback in the spring of 2006 to the most vicious measures of the immigrant bashers in Congress. Not the Democrats and "moderate" Republicans in Congress but the movement itself, to the enormous scope of its mass mobilizations, defeated this right-wing attack. If we allow our independent movement to dissipate and rely on the Congressional politicians, we can be sure that the right-wing immigrant bashers will return to the offensive and the opportunist liberal and moderate politicians in Congress will only pretend to oppose them. Even now the real demands of the mass movement of spring 2006 have not been taken up by a

single mainstream national politician and have yet to be covered accurately and seriously by the English-language news media.

A new civil rights movement must be independent of both the Republicans and Democrats. The logic of its positions must flow from its own struggles and the day-to-day experience of the movement's own rank and file and leadership, not the corrupt and cynical logic of politicians' election campaigns. We should support only those candidates and parties who stand unequivocally on the movement's positions of principle and identify openly with the movement's aims and struggles. The movement will have to fight to transform the terms of political discourse in the nation and to create a new political reality, not remain content with the choice between the open enemies of our principles and those who will seem to support them only to betray them.

20. Youth have played and must continue to play a decisive role in building this new movement. More than that, youth must play a decisive role in LEADING this new movement if its momentum is to survive and its power grow in the face of the attacks of its enemies and the sellouts of misleaders. This is the lesson of the history of every mass progressive movement of the past. Only the youth of the new movement can give it the ability to survive and prevail over defeats and betrayals, for the youth of every great movement alone have the energy and idealism that the twists and turns of history gradually wear out in a time-wearied older generation.

But history has also shown that a youth leadership does not arise spontaneously. The youth of the movement must recognize the importance of their special role. And a truly healthy movement, if it is to sustain itself, must recognize the necessity of building, training, and empowering its youth leadership.

BAMN is absolutely committed to building the new youth leaders of the new civil rights movement.

21. If it is to succeed, a new civil rights movement must base all its work and all its organizational structures on democratic norms, on the principle of the honesty and accountability of leaders before the movement's rank and file, and on the principle of the equality of women and men. Neither bureaucratic nor sexist privilege has a place in our new movement. Leaders must be selfless fighters devoted to the cause, not bureaucrats and politicians devoted to their own ambition and aggrandizement.

22. The new mass movement must see its task as nothing less than saving America through a consistent, determined, and independent struggle to defend and develop what has been best, most progressive, most democratic, most rational, most egalitarian, most honest, and most humane in American history. We fight for the America still "yearning to breathe free." And we fight to win.

Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration, & Immigrant Rights And Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)

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