

# Congratulations, Berkeley Sanctuary Community! Lessons of the Ann Coulter Protest



The UC Berkeley community came out to the defense of our campus as a sanctuary where immigrants, black, Latino/a, Asian American and other minorities, Muslim, Jewish, LGBTQ and women students are welcomed and where ICE and white supremacists are unwelcome. The attempt of the Berkeley College Republicans, with the complicity of the Chancellor, failed to terrorize the campus community. More than 2,000 students showed up to shut down Coulter—over and against the fear-mongering, gentle and aggressive discouragement from authority figures and so-called “campus community leaders”—did so because of a recognition of the historic period we are living in, the era of Donald Trump, and how we can no longer ignore our enemies or rely on “official” governmental or legal figures and/or processes to protect ourselves and our communities. The independent character of the demonstration, which BAMN had called for and organized throughout the week, is one of the most positive aspects of the night and a qualitative step forward for the national movement of resistance that has found itself over and over held back by the misleadership of the Democratic Party and their local agents that carry out their defeatist policies.

The garden variety of racist attendees, including Coulter and fascists like Kyle Chapman, had to leave the campus in shame, covering their face and with police escorts, unable to face the mass turnout of counter protestors. It was clear by the night’s end, with hundreds of protestors still occupying the spaces around Wheeler Hall, that the campus belongs to us and not to the racists.

This was the clearest example of what it means to mobilize community defense guards to defend our campus as a sanctuary. For the students and community who showed up, linked arms, picketed, chanted and worked collectively to stand up against racist attacks all night, this was an unforgettable experience and lesson of the power of mass struggle. For students, especially minority students, who already feel isolated, alienated and alone navigating a hostile Berkeley campus, this was an opportunity to forge unbreakable bonds with total strangers that cannot be forged in any other way but in true solidarity in mass struggle. The integrated character of the demonstration, with strong representation of and leadership from Latina women, made clear that this was an immigrant rights demonstration first and foremost and an adequate representation of the campus and Bay Area community. More than a protest against Ann Coulter, this was a mass

action of the national movement for the defense of immigrant rights and against Donald Trump.

On Monday, November 18th, statements started circulating around campus from the Multicultural Center staff and some ASUC senators advising minority and LGBTQ students to stay off campus on Wednesday Nov. 20th, the day of Ann Coulter's scheduled speech. This ridiculous advice amounted to saying that minority students should abandon their campus so that white supremacists could have free reign to come into campus to congregate, organize and carry out racist violence against minority and immigrant students.

BAMN rightfully condemned these efforts led by the administration and used it as an opportunity to expose and counter the cynicism of the administration and misleaders on campus. Our criticism was that if the advised line of the school administration is to tell minority and immigrant students to leave the campus because they cannot guarantee their safety during an official school-approved event of a racist bigot like Ann Coulter, then Chancellor Christ has no business being Chancellor and should resign.

BAMN campus leaders on Wednesday night were able to put in practice lessons learned from the latest actions and campaigns we have carried out throughout this semester. A "Make Eshleman Hall a Sanctuary" campus effort through the collection of over two thousand petition signatures, collected through classroom announcements, tabling and petitioning on campus, including rallies and mobilizations to the ASUC student government meetings, helped to politicize the campus and popularize the tactic of building community defense guards to intervene to stop deportations and protect our communities. A series of campus rallies in defense of DACA and immigrant rights and against Donald Trump helped to assert our leadership as the most serious, militant, political organization on campus. The experience of victories in court as a result of mass popular public campaigns to win asylum for the Benavides-Pineda family in immigration court, and also the defeat of criminal charges brought against BAMN leader Yvette Felarca and two community organizers in Sacramento court for their mobilization to shut down a Nazi rally, also served as valuable lessons of the power of organized, militant, collective struggle.

These experiences strengthened our ability and determination to successfully organize and mobilize to action the Berkeley campus and community and successively provide bold leadership in action.

There are important lessons to draw out and reflect on to improve, that are vital for the growth and political education of the movement. A calculation of our enemy's forces, both of the character and numbers of the racist and white-supremacist attendees as well as the police presence and policy on the night was also necessary to have an idea of what is possible to test out in the balance of forces between our enemy and the movement. These are basic lessons to learn as our movement grows in militancy and political consciousness. We won't be short of opportunities in the near future to test the capacity and will of our young movement.

The demonstration was the most militant action at the Berkeley campus in a long time. Spirits were high through the night. The chants were nonstop and could be heard throughout campus. The level of discipline and solidarity was impressive: even though for many attendees this was their first protest, many behaved like veterans of struggle. The commitment and efforts shown by our young movement on campus were beyond what any politician in America has shown since Trump was elected. They were a reminder that only mass, independent direct action of the movement can defend our communities from racist attacks and defeat Donald Trump.

This was an organizational success and a step forward for the movement and the latest victory in a series of struggles over the last couple of weeks on campus and the Bay Area. BAMN's political preparation at the campus beforehand made all the difference. The organizing focus of mobilizing the campus for the basic defense of immigrant rights and to defeat Donald Trump was the correct focus, and clearly the most popular motivation for the majority of protestors. Wednesday night showed that Berkeley is a sanctuary campus in action. Trump is on the ropes and our movement is once again on its feet. It is our collective task to motivate and lead the movement back to the streets to defend DACA and immigrants in America and to impeach and or remove Donald Trump.

Join BAMN and continue to build the movement to defeat Donald Trump and defend immigrant rights.

## **BAMN meets Mondays at 7pm at Dwinelle Hall, Rm. 130**

**Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action, Integration and Immigrant Rights and Fight for Equality By Any Means Necessary (BAMN)** [bamn.com](http://bamn.com) [Facebook.com/bamnpage](https://www.facebook.com/bamnpage) [california@bamn.com](mailto:california@bamn.com) 510-817-2617 *ASUC-sponsored*