



TESTIMONIES

Letter from UCB Alum Jevon: A Survivor's Story



Confessions.

The following statement is true based on the life and experiences of a former Detroit BAMN organizer. This statement corroborates with other statements and was recently found on the Facebook page **UC Berkeley**

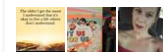
Secret Survivors of BAMN Facebook Page



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” Letter from UCB alum Jevon

I am running with Students for a Democratic University (SDU) as Student Advocate and I am an ex-member of BAMN.

I think I can give a little bit of an insider's perspective as to why it is not a good idea to have dealings with that organization. The dislike that most people in the activist community on campus have of BAMN stems from the fact that they are very sectarian, undemocratic, and obnoxious. If the problems with BAMN stopped there, I would be for working with them. However, internally, that organization is a lot more corrupt than people realize.

The organization is tightly controlled by two members, the President, Shanta , and another founding member named Leland. There is no democracy in the organization. Members are encouraged to follow whatever perspective and course of action that Shanta and Leland put forward. When disagreements arise between base members of the group and the leadership (i.e. Shanta and Leland), that is when things get scary. In order to coerce people into doing what they want them to do, at the leadership's command, this organization engages in a whole host of disgusting behavior like physically dragging people to meetings and political events, denouncing members who disagree as crazy/suicidal and encouraging them to take unprescribed medication, stealing money and i.d. cards to restrict the movement of dissident members, spreading lies about such members to turn others against them, etc. The list goes on and on. The way the organization makes this possible is often by convincing members to abandon their lives and come live in BAMN households. There, such members often become financially dependent on BAMN and many times, have no choice but to comply with orders so that they can eat and not end up homeless. Furthermore, many of the BAMN members are teenagers so this fact makes it even more possible for BAMN to prey on people that become financially dependent on them.

This issue has been coming up a lot lately so I am going to write a much more coherent statement on it documenting my horrible experience with this organization but I will start to talk about that here. I was one of those teenagers. I joined



**Secret
Survivors
of
BAMN**
March 12 at
11:23am

Once again, this page and the sites associated with Secret Survivors of BAMN orientates itself with the left! We don't want any right-wing piece of shits on here liking and sharing our posts! If you are a Trump/ Theresa May supporter, this isn't a page for you, now get the fuck out of here.

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BAMN when I was 14 and remained in the organized until I was nearly 18. When I was sixteen, BAMN convinced me that my family was abusive and crazy and that it was better that I move in with BAMN members. I did so against my family's will. When my family started to look for me, BAMN advised me that it was best that I move from my hometown (Detroit, MI) to live with BAMN members in another part of the country. They told me that I could legally solicit emancipation (without my parent's consent) upon turning 17 and since my birthday was soon, this meant that I would not be away from Detroit for longer than one month. However, they lied. They took me to Oakland, CA to live with Yvette Felarca and instructed me to change my name to "Chase Stern" and cut off all contact with family and friends and even other BAMN members in Detroit. I complied, thinking that that would only be for a short time.

However, upon turning 17, BAMN's leadership in Detroit just did not answer my phone calls. When they finally answered, they told me I had to just wait a little longer and each time, I would ask when I got to go home, this is the answer they would give me. I ended up being in Oakland for a year. A few weeks before I turned 18, I decided that I wanted to end the ordeal so I contacted my family and reconciled with them. My mother bought me a plane ticket back to Detroit. When I informed BAMN, they tried to talk me out of leaving, but I was adamant on returning home for at least a little while and having a chance to reestablish relations with my family and friends. When they realized they could not talk me out of leaving, they got physical. Yvette Felarca came into my room one night and instructed me to read out loud a statement that Shanta Driver had written and convinced me to sign about how my family was abusive. Tired of debating my decision with them, I refused. That night, Yvette and other BAMN members took turns sleeping by my bed to "make sure he doesn't go anywhere." They confiscated my house keys to restrict my movement.

The day before my flight back to Detroit, I was packing my clothes when BAMN members came in and told me that I could not pack my clothes in that luggage because that was luggage that they had provided me with. At this point, I still had illusions in BAMN. I called Shanta Driver, thinking

that situation in DAMENSO I called Shanta Driver, thinking that Yvette was just being unreasonable and overly pushy and that Shanta would work everything out. I told her what was happening and asked her to speak with Yvette and the other BAMN members and request that they let me leave. Much to my astonishment, Shanta refused. At that moment, I realized that I was in a cult and not only was Shanta well aware of what was taking place but that it was her plan all along. I called my mom at that point and in the midst of me talking to her, one of the BAMN members, Adi Hoag, a former Berkeley student, screamed "Grab his phone!" and 3 BAMN members grabbed me and tried to take my phone. Luckily, they were all pretty slightly built women so I managed to push them off of me and make it outside the house. I ran to the neighbors, explained to them what was going on, and she let me inside and closed the door.

My mom called the police and when they came, BAMN made up a lie about how I was trying to steal things from them. There were two white police officers and the 3 BAMN members there at the time were three white women so shockingly (or maybe not so shockingly), the police believed them and treated me like shit. All I was trying to do was get my belongings and get away and the cop said to me: "You, yourself, admit to be a runaway so why should we believe anything you say?" and "I should take you to juvenile and make you miss your flight tomorrow." I insisted on being able to get my belongings and at some point, the cops gave in and escorted me inside to get my things. Once inside, I discovered that BAMN had stolen the \$70 I had in my room and all my id cards. I got what I could and left. The phone that I was using had been disconnected since it was the name of Mark Airgood, a BAMN member and teacher in Oakland. The neighbor, however, let me use her phone to phone a friend, whose parents let me stay at his house and dropped me off at the airport the next morning. When I tried to inform other BAMN members about what had happened to me, particularly other youth many of whom I had recruited and therefore felt responsible for putting at risk, I learned that BAMN had denounced me to everyone. They told people that I had went crazy and turned against the organization and went to the police and that everyone should call off all

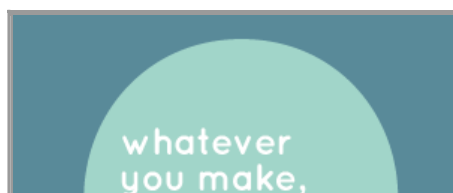
contact with me. They were also instructed to report my whereabouts to Shanta because they were looking for me to put me in a mental institution. Some BAMN members complied with this order but many did not, and ended up leaving the org in the fallout. I have heard many lies that BAMN spread about me to cover up what they did, including telling people that I tried to kill myself and that's why they intervened in the way that they did.

When I got to Detroit and started to tell people about my experiences, I learned from some ex-BAMN members (who had remained silent) that I was not the only person that had an experience like that with BAMN. There were many others. Some of these stories are even documented on the Internet. Anyway, for the longest, I have been publicly silent about my experience with BAMN because like others, I have believed that since they play such an active role in politics, on and off campus, it's better to not bump heads with them. However, a few days ago, I received a phone call from a BAMN member that I had never met before. He had gotten my phone number from other ex-members of BAMN and he wanted to talk to me to help him through his hellacious experience with BAMN. At that moment, I realized that I could no longer remain silent. This organization is continuing to manipulate young people and it has to stop. This is a really dangerous thing because this organization is luring young activist-minded individuals and unlike me, most of the people who survive BAMN draw the conclusion that they must abandon struggle. BAMN either converts you into a drone or it kills your fighting spirit.

I feel so strongly as to not working with BAMN that I think it's worth sharing that deeply personal story with all of you. I feel like by working with them we are validating their disgusting tactics and empowering them to get away with things like this with more people. That's my piece.

Jevon

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