

## **BAM I - 1970 to 1975**

In January of 1970, Black students became impatient with the university's unwillingness to make institutional changes to increase diversity and provide academic, financial, and social support for students of color, particularly Black students, who only made up 3.8% of students on campus. The Black Student Union, Black Law Students Association, Association of Black Social Work Students, and Black students from the Medical School and Psychology Department crafted a list of demands to present to the Board of Regents, the university's governing body. Together, they called themselves the Black Action Movement or BAM.

Focused on getting the university to set an institutional goal of 10% Black enrollment, the first Black Action Movement garnered hundreds of supporters that effectively led to a university shut down for 11 days. And shut down meant - Shut. Down. University service workers stopped working. Graduate students stopped teaching, and nearly 50% of LSA classes were canceled.

After meetings with the Board of Regents, faculty, and the university president, the strike ended in late March, and the BAM Negotiating Team emerged victoriously. The team secured a university commitment from the Regents to achieve 10% Black enrollment by the Fall of 1973. Every school and college agreed to contribute the necessary funds to accomplish the goal, and the president conceded to a host of other demands like creating a Black studies program. Noticeably absent from the concessions was the establishment of a Black student center.

To assist with the recruitment and retention of Black students, the Coalitions for the Use of Learning Skills, or CULS, was extended under the Opportunity Awards Program in 1970 as a direct response to BAM 1. These programs provided scholarships, intensive courses, tutoring, and study groups. In 1983, both programs were consolidated into one program: The Comprehensive Studies Program (CSP). Today CSP is a diverse U-M learning community providing holistic academic and personal support through a growing multi-disciplinary curriculum to over 3,000 students. CSP administers the Summer Bridge Scholars Program, a seven-week residential academic program that supports talented scholars as they transition from high school to the University of Michigan. CSP's primary aim is to foster a supportive learning community that empowers students to engage in active learning and leadership in and beyond the university.

Although the university Regents were not willing to fund a Black-focused student center, there was no rule against building one and finding someone else to pay for it. In 1971, a former BAM member, Dr. Charles C. Kidd, secured a grant to purchase a building on campus while serving as Assistant Vice President for Student Services.

Students returned from summer break in 1971 to a new Black student center, named after William Monroe Trotter, a late 19th and early 20th-century Black civil rights activist. The Trotter House contained counselors for Black students, event spaces for Black organizations, and enrichment opportunities to enhance the Black student experience. Six months later, the

building was destroyed by fire and rebuilt on the other side of campus in 1972. In 1983, the building was renamed the Trotter Multicultural Center.

At the same time as Trotter's initial founding back in 1971, the Office of Student Services reorganized into the Office of Special Services and Programs or OSSP. OSSP was a central area for communities of color at the University of Michigan, housing staff advocates that served various racial and ethnic groups. With a newly formed Constituency Services area, OSSP included a Black Student Advocate who would work primarily with Black students. OSSP would eventually become the Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs (MESA).

### **BAM II - 1975 to 1987**

In February of 1975, Black students reflected on the broken promises of the university. The university still hadn't reached 10% Black enrollment despite promising to do so by the Fall of 1973. On top of that, the denial of a Black woman for deanship in the College of Literature, Science, and Arts (LSA), the rejection of a proposal for an African-American history learning community, and the expulsion of a Black nursing student from the university left Black students feeling fed up!

Other communities of color were also growing frustrated. Chicano and Native American students wanted more university support and to have increased enrollment of students from their communities. Asian American students were required to prove their disadvantaged status to qualify for programs that would help them succeed at Michigan.

Out of this collective frustration, the Third World Coalition Council was born. Leaders from different identity-based student organizations united to challenge the university, led by members of the Black United Front. The Coalition launched a sit-in at the U-M Fleming Administration Building demanding increased support of their concerns.

However, the sit-in did not last long, nor did it fully achieve what it set out to do. The university president did agree to continue negotiations with the Coalition and grant a fair hearing to the previously expelled Black nursing student. After 60 hours, the students ended the sit-in.

This effort was later deemed Black Action Movement II, but it was neither as large, nor as impactful, as BAM I. This movement was, however, a crucial moment in the history and lineage of Black student activism at Michigan.

### **BAM III - 1987 to 2013**

In January of 1987, Black students, once again, were organizing themselves to combat and protest racist events on campus. Protests emerged after a group of Black women were given a fake hunting notice announcing open season on Black people. Additionally, a student-run radio show ran a segment where a caller made racist jokes while the host played laugh tracks.

Two groups emerged following these events - the United Coalition Against Racism (UCAR) and the Black Action Movement III (BAM 3). While UCAR's demands were focused toward minority students, BAM III presented a list of demands specific to Black students, including the uncompromised ratification of UCAR's demands -- one of those demands was for the creation of an Office of Minority Affairs.

When the sitting university president failed to meet any of UCAR's demands, a prolonged struggle between student activists and the university emerged. Following a sit-in, students realized they had to act faster and were time-pressed to get the university to meet their demands. So, UCAR invited Reverend Jesse Jackson to mediate negotiations between themselves and the university. In late March 1987, after hours of negotiations, Jackson and administrators agreed to six concessions later referred to as the "Six-Point Plan." One of those concessions was the creation of an Office of Minority Affairs. The office was tasked with assisting in recruiting and retaining minority students, faculty, and staff. Less than a decade later, the Office of Minority Affairs would change its name to the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, also known as OAMI.

### **#BBUM - 2013 to 2014**

In November of 2013, Black students organized to reckon with recent national racial events. That year, George Zimmerman, a white man, was acquitted in the shooting of a black teen, Trayvon Martin. Bloomberg News reported that Black enrollment was down 30% following a ban on affirmative action in Michigan, and racist comments on the website for the Michigan Daily, the university student newspaper. But, the breaking point for Black students was the announcement and promotion of a fraternity party called "World Star Hip Hop Presents: Hood Ratchet Thursday." While the party was prevented from happening and the fraternity was sanctioned by the university, the high levels of cultural appropriation and stereotypes present in the promotion caused the Black Student Union to take action. On November 19th, 2013, the BSU encouraged Black Wolverines to share their experiences as Black people at UM using the hashtag #BBUM, an acronym for Being Black at the University of Michigan. While some positive responses existed, an overwhelming majority of current and former students spoke to negative experiences from racial bias on campus to a lack of minority voices at the university. In less than a day, the hashtag was viral and trending on Twitter.

Two months later, on January 20th, 2014, the BSU presented seven demands following that morning's MLK Symposium Keynote Lecture. They gave the university 7 days to comply and respond to their demands, one of which was establishing a new Trotter Multicultural Center to be located on Central Campus. Five days later, members and leaders of the BSU sat down with university administrators and received a commitment of \$300,000 to renovate the existing Trotter Multicultural Center. Additionally, the university reaffirmed its commitment to build a new Trotter Multicultural Center on the central campus. In 2018, the William Monroe Trotter Multicultural Center opened its doors on the University of Michigan's central campus, thanks to the BSU and #BBUM.

The history of Black student activism at the University of Michigan is profound, although at times controversial and complex. The tremendous resources to support students of color were at the expense of Black students who spent significant time and energy fighting for increased funding, office spaces, and buildings to improve their educational experience. Thanks to them, we now have the Comprehensive Studies Program, the Office of Academic Multicultural Initiatives, the Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs, and the Trotter Multicultural Center.

By taking advantage of the history and legacy of the Black Action Movement, you are paying homage to the Black students of the past and advancing the path for future generations here at the University of Michigan.