

AFTER THE GENERAL MEETING: BLM FOLLOW-UP WITH TOISHA TUCKER

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By Hayley Gorenberg

Interviewed after the GM, member Toisha Tucker expressed disbelief that the Coop had not spoken up, even after earlier killings of Black New Yorkers like Eric Garner (and many others). Tucker linked food justice, climate justice and racial justice as intertwined and called on the Coop to engage in “reckoning with racism and white supremacy in America.”

Tucker recounted that following the GM they had received email from Coop Diversity and Equality Committee Chair Maitefa Angaza, who had attended the GM and invited Tucker to collaborate with DEC and review a new statement. Angaza also invited Tucker to attend a “White Now” meeting, which Angaza described as “intended for white Coop members, calling on them to step up to support the Black Lives Matter movement going forward, holding themselves accountable to its objectives.” Angaza continued, “We think among the first steps to be taken are educating themselves about the issues and confronting the consequences of inaction.” Angaza added, “Black Coop members will soon be invited to attend a BLM meeting in our own safe and respected space. Not long after, we intend to bring the two group of affinity participants together for a dialogue that we hope will lead to significant action taken on the part of the Coop.”

Angaza invited Tucker’s response, as well as feedback on a “combined statement” from the DEC, drawing from Tucker’s statement, welcoming all to the Coop and condemning “systemic racism and murderous violence, discrimination, oppression and disenfranchisement against which Black people continue to struggle in the United States and the intersectional inequities which often go unnamed and unnoticed.”

Tucker wrote back, “I had no intention of and did not attend the ‘White Now’ Zoom meeting. I have actually been very clear that it is unfathomably tone deaf for the PS-

FC to center Whiteness when we haven't even made any substantive statement in support of Black lives. In my presentation I mentioned I won't give any more emotional labor to this. I do not wish to be part of the DEC statement or to be associated with the statement the DEC has written. Please remove my name and your heavily edited version of my statement."

Tucker critiqued the Coop's public presence to date, because it "never says we don't support white supremacy, and we don't support racism. It continues to be frustrating and disappointing. I don't want to spend my life fighting the Coop to acknowledge something that simple."

But Tucker remains a Coop member "It's easy to have the kneejerk reaction of, 'I'm just leaving that place,'" they said. Instead, they have decided to "let it play out and see what happens. If nothing happens, and the Coop just stays the same, I can find another place. If it's not going to be value-aligned, why should I give money or time to it?"

Tucker has experience in organizing, including working on Hillary Clinton's presidential campaign and Stacey Abrams' gubernatorial campaign. "I pick races, and I go, and I work for those races when I know they really need the bodies," they said.

Working as an artist, focusing on race and gender, Tucker has plans for additional work based on their longstanding love for Virginia Woolf, who they discovered had appeared in blackface. They are also doing COVID-related work focusing on "what it means to be a citizen in a society that will dig mass graves for you and throw you in." They connected the subject to food production, including meatpacking. "I personally think I could do without chicken if people needed to be safe. I could go without a hamburger if people needed to be safe," they said. "Capitalism really will kill you, and we're seeing it."

Tucker has submitted their statement in support of Black lives for a vote at the Coop's July 28 GM. "There are corporations doing the worst things ever who wrote bet-

ter statements,” they said. “It’s disheartening and it’s demoralizing to be part of an institution that can’t write a statement in support of Black lives. It’s totally an act of white violence.”