BOTH MEMBER + SHOPPER, NOT EITHER/OR

August 18, 2020

PSFC's mission reads: "The Park Slope Food Coop is a member-owned and operated food store …"

At the 7/28 GM, members were asked to be our Better Selves in considering and approving the Black Lives Matter statement. Then, the Coordinators asked us to consider a markup increase to help PSFC's economic recovery. This proposal felt like an austerity measure asked of me as a shopper-customer.

We each are both a member and a shopper. As "an alternative to commercial profit-oriented business," our PSFC challenge is to hold and practice Both aspects vs. Either/Or. At the GM, a small yet significant symbol was that the Coordinators remembered the dollar amount of fresh MOEI recently infused into PSFC but not how many members/member-households made those investments.

I cherish PSFC as a nugget in our collective endeavor towards Another Future that is Possible. At a time when many are receiving packaged food distribution, the psychological and nutritional value of even a modicum of fresh produce cannot be overstated. So, when Coordinator Joe S characterized the proposed markup as affordable since folks are no longer going to restaurants, I asked myself: How many members who currently don't shop at PSFC or shop infrequently might be receiving boxed food distributions and/or standing in a food-pantry line?

Money is critical for PSFC to operate as a store. At the same time, PSFC would have lost its soul if certain members could no longer come to the Coop or afford to shop in it.

I am a Chinese-Asian American, self-identified as POC. A member since 1988 and a Park Slope resident for 18 years (until 2004), I have experienced many phases of PSFC.

Proposals:

- Immediately re-institute the member-labor arrangement in whatever manner feasible.
- The first order of business should be an Audit (not a survey) to look into the well being of each member in each Squad/Committee as well as unattached members, prioritizing those who have not shopped since early March.
- An Audit will show members who have transitioned, recovering from COVID-19, grieving losses, or struggling to cover rent, food and other necessities. It likely find Black and Brown members who have not shopped recently residing in clusters/areas due to Brooklyn's segregated housing.
- Since the PSFC process requires two GMs to approve a proposal, the audit should be started by a team of volunteer members with pertinent skills and necessary staff support.
- PSFC proactively uses its vendor relationships and buying power to join forces with mutual-aid groups, pantries and smaller food coops. By leveraging PSFC capabilities, we can expand collaborative buying and allow fresher produce to be more accessible.

Black Lives Matter because not everyone has mattered under the euphemistic "All Lives Matter" approach to which the business and institutional sides of PSFC have often succumbed too easily. However, PSFC has too much history and potential for us to give up. Let's actively work towards Both aspects in a wholistic PSFC.

Respectfully,

Marion Yuen