

A HASHTAG IN LIEU OF LASTING CHANGE

October 18, 2021

In July 2020, a statement adorning our homepage was approved that “The Park Slope Food Coop unequivocally supports Black lives and the dismantling of all systems that propagate and empower systemic racism.” The same month, I attended a virtual seminar open to all members entitled “White Now? Being White at the Coop and Beyond.” When asked what BIPOC meant, the white moderator noted that “B” stood for biracial. While this was a safe space for sharing and learning, it was disappointing that a lack of information diluted Blackness at the onset, setting the tone for an already thematically problematic session.

An essential, albeit difficult, part of deconstructing a racist system is looking internally to see how we are perpetuating the problem—especially unintentionally—and where we must do better.

Developing a mandatory racial microaggression and implicit bias training for all existing and new members, similarly to how organizations onboard employees, is a step in demonstrating that the Coop is serious about inculcating the values we profess to uphold. Deploying a trending hashtag in solidarity is not enough.

Facing challenges with no simple solutions—like revenue regeneration and labor shortages impacting supply—I have tremendous admiration for the resilience and stamina the full-time and temporary staff has demonstrated during the pandemic to keep the Coop operational and its members protected, informed, and nourished. As we move through this next phase, my hope is that the Coop will also proactively prioritize and implement actions that foster an anti-racist community.

Respectfully,

Mandira Ghai