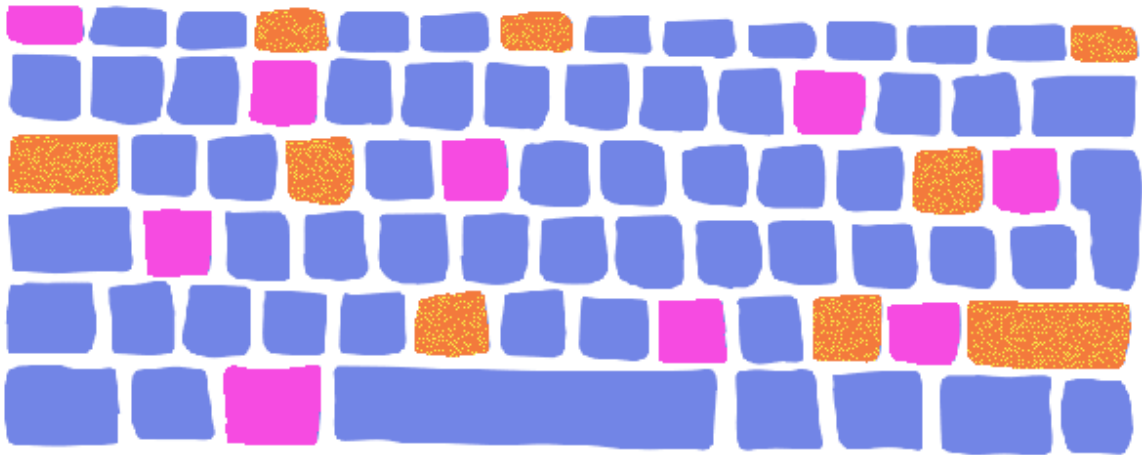


MAY 21, 2024

May 21, 2024

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editor's note: The Gazette acknowledges that a math error was published in Morgan Vö's April 30th letter and in Dena Beard's letter below. Both letters claim that only .015% of members can assemble at our General Meetings, when in fact the correct number is 1.5%.

Keep Our Ramps Wild and Wonderful

FELLOW RAMP ENTHUSIASTS,

Ramps are an exciting and fleeting marker that warm weather has finally arrived and harvest season is around the corner. The fact that they are a native species that can only be foraged, and their season is so short, makes each bunch special.

However, I noticed that the ramps the Coop sells come with the bulb and root intact.

The bulbs are like the heart of a ramp—they're what make them grow. Harvesting the entire bulb and roots prevents the plant from regenerating in future years.

According to responsible foraging practices, ramps should be snipped from the leaves only to allow the bulb to grow a new plant in future years. Some botanists also recommend taking only one of the two leaves of the plant—leaving the remaining leaf to photosynthesize.

It takes several years for ramps to mature. If you couple bad foraging practices with over-harvesting due to extreme demand, there's a real risk that patches will be depleted and ramps will become extinct.

I'm concerned our current supplier may not be engaging in sustainable and conservation-minded foraging practices. According to my research, NJ-based Meadows and More, which is carried by Farm to People and Fresh Direct, offers responsibly foraged ramps. Perhaps there are additional suppliers.

Shouldn't we be leading the charge in demanding responsible foraging practices? If we want ramps on our plates each spring, we've got to give them a fighting chance to regrow.

Together, we can ensure that ramps stick around for generations to come.

*In cooperation,
Dan Gustafson*

Return Policy

DEAR MEMBERS:

The Food Coop allows returns of certain products within 30 days of purchase, provided that you have the Paid-In-Full receipt. This **MUST** be presented, per policy.

I use a debit card to pay for items and after reconciling my receipt, recycle the receipt.

Some items, like a product in a glass jar or can, may not have an apparent problem until you use it. In my case, two glass product jars had caps on too tight to open, even after using hot water, grip cloths, and jar openers.

I have no problem with the time limitation. But I asked the Office if they could provide a copy of the paid receipt and the answer was no.

I am curious if it is the case that the Office doesn't store paid receipts or perhaps could store the receipts to assist members with returns.

Perhaps the Coop would consider elective electronic receipts so that we don't have to print out receipts for members who don't need the paper. The electronic receipts could be sent to a member's email. Many stores have this option. This can save a lot of paper.

Thank you for your consideration of the above.

In Cooperation,

Contra Assertions of Coop Leadership, Its Bylaws Do Not Bar Hybrid General Meetings

DEAR MEMBERS,

At April's General Meeting, a member led a welcome discussion about making the Coop more accessible to working families and other members who are less able to fulfill work requirements and physically attend General Meetings. Her proposal was met with spirited approval. Several members shared encouraging ideas. Everyone in the packed Picnic House agreed that more of our nearly 16,000 members should be "in the room" for Coop General Meetings.

And then the Coop's General Manager took the mic to temper enthusiasm for a hybrid meeting option (i.e., in-person and online). "Read the bylaws," he admonished. General Manager Joe Holtz reminded us that our bylaws, written in the 1970s by a lawyer-member, require all votes be cast "in person." And so, he intimated, the Coop cannot simply approve holding its meetings online.

Well, I have read the bylaws. And the Coop's meeting guide. I've also consulted with a fellow lawyer who advises New York cooperatives like ours.

Our bylaws state: *"All votes shall be cast in person and no proxy voting shall be permitted...however...the Board may...direct that a mail ballot be taken"* In other words, all votes must be cast personally, not by "proxy," and during the General Meeting—except when the Board directs voting by mail.

New York law, which governs the Coop, agrees. State law specifically says that "in person" presence at board meetings is fulfilled via any technology that allows everyone

participating to hear each other contemporaneously, i.e., conference calls, Zoom, etc.

Though they were drafted in the 1970s, the Coop's bylaws continue to serve us well - today. The good news is state law and our bylaws tell us that our "in person" voting requirement is met equally by physical *and* online presence at General Meetings.

Onwards,

M.J. Williams, Esq.

Hybrid Meetings Will Provide True Inclusion

DEAR ALL:

I'm writing in support of the proposal to allow hybrid (online and in-person) General Meetings, which at the time of my writing has been obstructed from being heard for several months. As a Coop member-owner with disabilities, this proposal is personally important to me, as well as important to the health and vibrancy of the Coop as a whole.

At the outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, disability communities noted that schools, workplaces and other organizations, which had previously balked at providing virtual and hybrid options as disability accommodations, suddenly found ways to make that approach work. Many, including myself, hoped organizations would learn from this—and many have continued to provide hybrid options. It's disheartening to see that the Coop has backslid and, despite clearly having the capacity to conduct virtual meetings, the Agenda Committee and General Coordinators are digging in heels rather than embracing the opportunity to truly include all members of our community.

It's also worth noting that, as a place of business, the Coop may have obligations un-

der the Americans with Disabilities Act to ensure equal access and communication for members with disabilities. I wouldn't want the Coop to run afoul of the law; and even more so, as a community that purports to care about its members, I would hope the Coop wouldn't want to be in violation of the spirit of the law and of inclusivity.

This proposal is deeply important to members with disabilities, as well as parents, caregivers and many others. All of us deserve to participate in the Coop's General Meetings and policymaking. I hope the Coop will finally allow members to hear the hybrid proposal at a General Meeting, and I urge everyone to vote in favor.

*In cooperation,
CJ Glackin*

Bullying and Mockery at General Meeting

TO THE EDITOR:

I attended the April General Meeting and wanted to share something I heard there. I have been a Coop member for 5 years, but have not attended a GM previously. What I heard was a group attending the meeting laughing at multiple speakers. The laughter was not at jokes or awkward pauses. They were laughing with derision. They were laughing over people with whom they disagreed. I find their behavior unacceptable and creating a hostile atmosphere at what is supposed to be an inclusive community meeting. I also worry that their bullying will discourage members from speaking at the GM.

I ask that in future meetings if this or other groups attempt to menace our fellow members, those running the meeting do not tolerate it. I plan to be at my second meeting as soon as possible and hope to not see this behavior again.

*Thanks,
Nathalie Hirschtritt*

Is the Coop a Welcoming Environment for Its Muslim Members?

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Last month, while walking aisles of the Coop, my young daughter asked, “Why are there no things for Ramadan at the Coop?”

I turned to her, surprised.

She pointed to the endcap. “Here—where the Coop always puts the Christmas and Easter and Hanukkah stuff... you know.” I gave her a response about how Ramadan isn’t a consumer holiday (yes, she understands what that means), and we moved on to croissants.

See, growing up Muslim in NYC, I never expected my Muslimness to be affirmed, represented or even acknowledged positively in spaces like our grocery store.

In fact, a few weeks earlier, the night before the first of Ramadan, the Coop didn’t even have any dates on the shelf, let alone anything else that acknowledged the start of Ramadan. Yes, maybe there were some in the basement. Yes, maybe there were lots of other Muslim Coop members shopping for their Ramadan dates that night, but still: The night before Ramadan, there were no dates on the shelves.

That night, I realized that the Coop was a place that maybe didn’t want me—or at least didn’t know me, or didn’t care to.

This Ramadan, as I watched Muslims across the sea be slaughtered, I wondered: Is the Coop, whose ethos is about community and cooperation, concerned at all for its

Muslim members and whether they feel safe and welcome in its climate of silence, erasure and “neutrality”?

My daughter’s question was a hopeful one. She didn’t see any reason why Ramadan items wouldn’t be displayed prominently in her grocery store where the Christmas and Hanukkah items go.

She’s right. We deserve to feel welcome, safe and affirmed in our Coop, too. I thank PSFC for Palestine for their advocacy that makes us feel less alone.

With hope,

A fellow Coop member

(The author of this letter has requested their name be omitted for safety reasons.)

Let’s Stick to Our Mission: Trust and Respect for All!

FELLOW MEMBERS,

I have been a member of our cherished Coop for about 8 years. I value our cooperation. I love being a part of a trusted neighborhood institution. Our Coop works because we work together, despite our differences. The mission statement reads: “Working together builds trust through cooperation. We strive to make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all and to respect the opinions, needs and concerns of every member.”

However, since some members reignited efforts to join the BDS movement I have not felt trust or safety in the building. On the eve of Passover, I visited the Coop to pick up some last-minute things for my Seder, one of which was matzah. As I placed the box of matzah made in Jerusalem in my cart, I had an overwhelming wave of fear pass over me. What if someone were to challenge my purchase because I chose the

Israeli matzah? Was I prepared to discuss and defend my purchase? No one should experience fear of confrontation within our Coop walls, especially when purchasing a food needed to celebrate one's religion.

This issue is far too divisive and will rot our precious community. Let's preserve trust and safety. Can we please put the BDS talk to rest? Each member can make their own informed choice of what to purchase. Let's practice what we preach!

Abigail Greenbaum

My Bamba, My Choice

DEAR EDITOR:

I buy EcoLove Shampoo and Conditioner at the Coop. They are beautiful, environmentally-sound, Israeli products. As an Israeli, I am proud of the innovation and to have them at my Coop. The movement to stop selling Israeli products at the Coop is profoundly triggering to me and it makes me feel like I do not belong at the Coop, that there is no room for an Israeli person among its members. I am not alone. The message is, "If it's from there, we don't want it here."

I wonder, when US governmental policies led to the separation of children from their parents at the US/Mexico border, and toddlers were subsequently held in cages, how many Coop members deeply opposed this policy, and how many were horrified by the actions of the first Trump presidency, and how many still had the privilege to continue to earn a livelihood notwithstanding the actions of their government, and their deep opposition thereto?

The privilege of being psychologically troubled without an actual disruption to your life is not lost on us. If you think that ending the nightmare in the Middle East will be

the result of a Bamba boycott and it makes you feel better not to buy it, then don't. I'd like to, though.

Amira Samuel

Discovering Joy in Al Arz Tahini: A Delicious Recipe Inside!

FELLOW SHOPPERS,

I hope this letter finds you well and within arm's reach of the delightful creaminess of one of my favorite Coop products: Al Arz Tahini! There's something about its smooth texture and rich flavor that brings my palate great joy.

If you have yet to discover this gem while browsing the aisles, you can find it nestled near the nut butters. Not only does it satisfy my cravings, but it also carries a meaningful story of inclusivity and support for human rights. Did you know it's made by an Israeli Arab who champions LGBT rights? It's truly inspiring to see a product that not only tastes great but also stands for something meaningful.

Now, onto a delicious and quick tahini recipe that's one of my favorites, a Date Tahini Smoothie:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of your favorite milk
- 1 frozen banana, sliced
- 4 pitted frozen dates
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of Al Arz Tahini
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- Dash of sea salt

- Ice cubes

Instructions:

1. In a blender, combine the milk, banana, dates, tahini, vanilla extract and sea salt.
2. Blend until smooth, adding ice cubes as desired for thickness.
3. Pour into a glass, take a sip, and savor the creamy goodness of standing against BDS and supporting products that promote unity and understanding.

I hope you give this product a try! Here's to spreading love, inclusivity, and delicious flavors with every jar of Al Arz Tahini.

In cooperation,

Tali Rasis

On Antisemitism

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS:

To all those labeling the BDS campaign as antisemitic, your accusations are contributing to an international campaign of dangerous misinformation and fearmongering. You endanger Jews by degrading the meaning of antisemitism, which everyone should take seriously. In 2021, a distinguished group of Holocaust, Jewish studies and Middle Eastern studies scholars convened in Jerusalem to craft a comprehensive definition of the term—a corrective to definitions of antisemitism which wrongly conflate Judaism with Zionism.

The Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism states: "Supporting the Palestinian de-

mand for justice and the full grant of their political, national, civil and human rights” is NOT antisemitic. Neither is “evidence-based criticism of Israel.” Also included in the declaration: “Boycott, divestment and sanctions are commonplace, non-violent forms of political protest against states. In the Israeli case they are not, in and of themselves, antisemitic.”

Disingenuous rhetoric forces us to clarify language when it is weaponized in bad faith. Accusing PSFC Members for Palestine of being “violent” or “antisemitic” is akin to reducing the brave students currently protesting on their campuses against genocide to “outside” and “violent” “agitators.” There is no violence in demanding divestment from complicit institutions, no violence in demanding justice for a state that has murdered over 40,000 Palestinians in less than seven months. However, it is harmful and dangerous to falsely accuse such movements of threatening the safety of others, as when our fellow Coop members coordinated a campaign threatening the Brooklyn College Tow Center with violence if they rented it to the PSFC for a boycott discussion. Such campaigns produce a dampening effect on our ability to engage in genuine debate, and bring a carceral logic into our community that enables the kinds of violent crackdown on peaceful protest that we are seeing all across the world.

Read more on the JDA [here](#).

From Jewish Coop members,

Harry August, Alyce Barr, Anya Bernstein, Mischa Berlin, Naomi Brussel, Allison Chomet, Jesse Daniels, Susanna de Martino, Moriah Engelberg, Andy Fidoten, Naomi Fischer, Tal Frieden, Aaron Friedman, Caroline Friedman, Claire Glass, Sophie Glickman, Willa Glickman, Hannah Gold, Maurice Goldberg, Phoebe Helander, Rachel Levenson, Madeleine Levin, Jake Lichter, Julian Meltzer, HanaKyle Moranz, Mallory Muratore, Willy Naess, Todd Neufeld, Aaron Posner, Bob Rosen, Gemma Sack, Djuna Schamus, Rebecca Schoenberg-Jones, Mai Schotz, Zachary Schulman, Monroe Street Schostal, Hillela Simpson, Adam Thoma-Perry, Jess Wachtler, Carol Wald, Fay Walker, M.J. Williams

Coop Unity

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS:

If you are reading this letter, then you already are aware there is a group of members who are exploiting Coop resources to promote the highly divisive and controversial BDS Movement. This movement includes the unlawful, destructive and violent demonstrations at US college campuses that occurred at the end of April 2024. The BDS Movement's goal is to eliminate the State of Israel and return Jews to a condition of powerlessness.

If you agree the Park Slope Food Coop should not be used as a forum for BDS, you are not alone. We have joined together to preserve the Coop community's cohesiveness. We are Pro-Peace, Pro-Coexistence, Pro-Coop.

We are Coop Members for Unity. You can join us and learn more at this link.

Barbara Mazor

Coop Members for Unity

Let the Coop Be Unified Against Genocide

TO THE EDITOR:

Recent letters have called for a unified Coop—one that values diversity and welcomes all. Disguised by these familiar terms for progressive values is an underlying demand to support Israel by purchasing its products. According to those who call for unity, this support must be unconditional. If not, the Coop will be disunited, uninclusive, even anti-Semitic. If we follow this logic, this support must continue while Israel commits

genocide against Palestinians, killing over 30,000—including over 15,000 children; it must continue while Israel allows and fosters illegal settlements on stolen Palestinian land; it must continue while Israel blocks virtually all food and medical aid from entering Gaza and creates famine; it must continue while Israel denies equal rights to its Palestinian citizens, keeping them under military rule; it must continue while Israel surveils and arrests and imprisons Palestinian children and adults without charges; it must continue while Israel remains a separate and unequal state where Palestinian Israelis cannot even travel on the same roads as Jewish Israelis.

Is there another country that supplies Coop products, a country that is committing similar atrocities? Is there another apartheid state that sells its goods to the Coop? If so—we must immediately unify to boycott products from such countries, just as we must now unify to boycott Israeli products.

*May we use our cooperation to repair the world,
Alyce Barr*

Consistent Foreign Policy

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS:

Not that I'm in favor of the Coop having a foreign policy, but if we have one, we should be consistent about our beliefs.

If a boycott of Israeli goods should be adopted, the Coop should also boycott all goods from:

1. The People's Republic of China, because of their genocidal treatment of the Uighurs and Tibetans, and its repression of the people of Hong Kong.
2. The Russian Federation, because of its unnecessary war of aggression against

Ukraine, their illegal annexation of Crimea, and their continued occupation of portions of the Republic of Georgia and the Republic of Moldova, in defiance of international law, and their bans on LGBTQ+ movements and imprisonment of LGBTQ+ activists.

3. The Kingdom of Morocco, because of their continued occupation of the Sahrawi Arab Democratic Republic, in defiance of international law, and its imprisonment of LGBTQ+ people.
4. The Republic of Turkiye, because of its continued oppression of its Kurdish minority.
5. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, because of its treatment of its only legitimate opposition party, including barring its candidate from the next election on no legitimate grounds.
6. The Republic of Azerbaijan, because of its ethnic cleansing and oppression of its Armenian minority in Nagorno-Karabakh.
7. The Republic of Serbia, because of its continued denial of independence to the ethnic-Albanian inhabitants of Kosovo.
8. The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, because of its military coup and refusal to accept the results of its democratic 2021 election.
9. Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen, because of their direct assault on international, including American, shipping in the Red Sea.
10. Iran, Iraq and Pakistan, because they level the death penalty for LGBTQ+ relationships.
11. Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Djibouti, Sudan, Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Cameroon, Nigeria, Togo, Ghana, Liberia, Senegal, Mauritania, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan for imprisonment of LGBTQ+ people.

Greg Costikyan

Let's Give Institutional Neutrality Its Due

DEAR *LINEWAITERS' GAZETTE*,

Institutional neutrality will keep any issue which offers no tangible benefit out of the Coop. BDS is one such issue. They have turned up the heat but offer little light in the discussion. Union Street is not the Middle East.

Iran and Hamas have no intention of making peace and mostly foment terror. Don't - make the Coop a battleground. There are plenty of places to go for that game.

The Coop is a beacon of how sensible management works. Politics can spoil the fruit of years of patient and loving labor. The best way forward is keeping outside issues outside the Coop.

Rodger Parsons

Democracy, Guardrails and the Coop

DEAR COOP MEMBERS:

One thing I find so interesting about the Coop is that it serves as a social experiment in democracy, testing how democratic principles can be effectively implemented. Different countries and organizations apply democracy in various ways, but at its core, it emphasizes the rule of the majority, ensuring decision-making reflects the collective will and is grounded in equality and fairness. In other words, merely calling yourself a democracy doesn't make you one; you need to stay true to its core principle. This principle is that every member's vote contributes equally to shaping our policies and laws, balancing majority interests with protections for minority rights.

In our Coop, applying democracy means not just following majority rule but also installing guardrails to protect the basic rights of all community members. For example, a decision to boycott certain products should consider the impact on members who

find these products a core part of their identity. This raises a difficult question: What is more important in democracy, the basic rights that should never be compromised, or majority rule? Ideally, when these work together, democracy is at its best.

We should strive to achieve this balance if we are truly serious about democracy. This is indeed a process, but to move in that direction, I suggest adding a guardrail to avoid boycotting products based on ethnicity.

Sincerely,
Yuval Inselberg

A Practical Solution to the Coop's GM Venue Issue

DEAR MEMBERS,

Considering that less than .015% of our membership can assemble at our current General Meeting ("GM") venue, it's discouraging that the Coop's administration has given up on finding a larger venue for GMs with popular agenda items. Instead, it's using difficulties with renting a venue as a means to prevent popular agenda items from being presented to our membership.

I invite the General Coordinators ("GCs") to prove me wrong, but I have particular insight into this issue.

As readers might recall, I direct Brooklyn College's Tow Theater, which the Coop sought to rent for two different Coop meetings. Because one of these meetings concerned a boycott of certain Israeli goods, a dozen Coop members, opposed to this boycott, falsely claimed Brooklyn College would witness violence if it hosted the meeting. These threats worked, and Brooklyn College will no longer rent to the Coop. Still, I offered to assist the GCs with finding another venue, as long as they would ensure

Coop members would not harass another institution. The GCs rebuffed my offer. Moreover, the GCs have clarified that they will do nothing to prevent members from engaging in intimidation tactics that interfere with Coop business and democratic processes. Since October 2023, the GCs have managed to find only my venue, will not accept help with finding another location and will permit Coop members to sabotage future rentals with violent threats.

As a result, when the Coop administration tells a member that their GM proposal requires a larger venue, the administration is really saying that the member proposal will not be heard.

We should reject suppression of our democratic process and demand the Coop administration place all member proposals onto GM agendas. A practical and productive solution that circumvents this censorship is holding online or online/live GMs. Let's do it!

Dena Beard

DEAR COOP MEMBERS,

I attended the April GM, where I heard several comments referencing a letter from Dena Beard in the April 30th issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. I am extremely disturbed by the incident reported in that letter and would like to alert my fellow members to the urgency of correcting the problems it highlights. In brief, following Joe Holtz's announcement at the March GM that the Brooklyn College Tow Center was a possible venue for a future GM involving a BDS proposal, Coop members who oppose the proposal contacted the Brooklyn College administration and used scare tactics to scuttle the arrangement. As a result, Brooklyn College will not rent to us.

In other words, Coop members who are afraid of the results if we follow the democratic decision-making process mandated in our bylaws successfully intervened to sabo-

tage that process. This sets a very dangerous precedent, especially if this serious breach of cooperative principles goes unchallenged. Making a bad situation even worse, the episode caused negative professional consequences for Dena herself.

When one member raised this matter at the April GM, General Coordinator Ann Herpel replied that people are free to file a complaint with the Dispute Resolution Committee. She then spoke of a recent email in which she cautioned members against contacting potential meeting venues, either to facilitate arrangements or to lobby against a rental—as though the two sorts of “infraction” were somehow comparable.

I had hoped the GCs would offer more constructive leadership in this situation by making clear that threats of violence and obstruction of Coop operations are unacceptable and uncooperative. Absent that messaging, we the members are still faced with the pressing task that Dena’s letter outlines: “It is essential that we find ways to renew the Coop’s democracy.”

*In cooperation,
Kumru Toktamis*

One Response to Allegations of a “Coordinated Campaign” of Intimidation regarding BDS Discussion

DEAR EDITOR:

In a letter titled “Coop Members Engage in Intimidation Campaign” (Apr. 30, *Linewaiters’ Gazette*) Dena Beard writes she “received 11 voicemails and was forwarded an email sent to senior Brooklyn College leadership that urged them to deny rental requests by the PSFC.” The rental request was for discussion of BDS. Ms. Beard further implies that she initiated the availability of her workplace, The Tow Center, stating “I offered space to help the Coop carry out its member-driven operations.”

Ms. Beard states she believes the communications were a “coordinated campaign” and “each message suggested that violence would occur if the college rented to the PSFC.” She does not state which party the callers indicated could be violent. She does not produce any quote from the email to support her claim. She provides no evidence for what she describes as “being bullied and harassed,” “intimidation tactics” and “adversely affected professionally.”

If Ms. Beard feels intimidated by a few voicemails, then surely she must understand how some Coop members feel about using Coop resources to promote the annihilatorist BDS movement. In light of the recent violent campus pro-BDS demonstrations, concern about violence coming from the BDS side is not unreasonable. Brooklyn College is a publicly funded institution and New Yorkers have a right to voice their opinion on how it is used.

Avishay Mazor

Ignore a Boycott’s Impact on Members at Our Own Peril

DEAR MEMBERS:

The rise of antisemitism in Brooklyn should concern everyone in our community. The suggested boycott of Israeli goods is a divisive issue, unsupported by many members. The divisiveness is causing unnecessary personal anguish to many members of our community. Ignoring the impact is a deliberate choice.

It is critical that we abide by the Coop’s democratic model and debate this issue in a civil way, in accordance with our rules and bylaws. I have personally witnessed and heard about the harassment of members of our community. For example, a member was yelled at in line simply for being Israeli and not supportive of the BDS movement. Though I believe that people should promote the causes they believe in, the intima-

tion of other members is unacceptable and not in line with the spirit of the Coop.

I am against this boycott, aligned with BDS, which not only targets Israeli products but also organizations and grassroots initiatives like Peace Now. I don't believe the ideas promoted by BDS are aligned with the Coop's values. Israeli products are a small part of the wonderful international offerings of our local Coop and part of why I love shopping here. I also value the diversity of the Coop community, which has members from all over the world and borough.

Though, of course, individual members should remain free to make buying choices that align with their values, I opposed implementing this on a Coop-wide level. There are atrocities happening globally; to single out Israel seems unjustified. While I understand the intent behind the boycott is a peaceful protest, bringing this debate to our Coop seeds division. We should engage democratically, respecting each other's viewpoints and following cooperative principles. Cooperation is at the core of our community, not confrontation and shouting at people you disagree with.

Diana Chase

Let's Build Community, Not Destroy It

DEAR FELLOW COOP MEMBERS,

Since joining the Coop just two years ago, one of the things that I have found most striking is the true diversity of thought, which seems to exist in fewer and fewer spaces as our world becomes more divisive. If we adopt BDS, we will alienate member-owners who may not agree with the movement's tactics or objectives. Our Coop should strive to be inclusive and welcoming to all members, regardless of their political beliefs.

BDS unfairly singles out and demonizes Israel, undermining efforts towards peace and dialogue. By endorsing BDS, the Coop would take a stance on a highly complex and contentious issue, potentially polarizing our community and detracting from our shared goals of sustainability, social responsibility, and creating community.

Instead of endorsing BDS, I believe our Coop should focus on fostering dialogue and understanding around the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Let's work together to build a more inclusive and united community, where diverse perspectives are respected and celebrated.

Aaron Karas

Community, the Antidote

FELLOW MEMBERS,

These past several months have been some of the loneliest of my life.

Jews are 0.2% of the world's population. Our voices are easily drowned out by the masses, and many of us are afraid to speak up. We watch our neighbors stay silent as antisemitism rages throughout our city and our world. But the loudest voices are not always the right ones.

So, today, I am using my voice. Maybe it will reach beyond the noise.

Most of my family lives in Israel, the homeland of the Jewish people. They are not monsters targeting civilians and committing genocide as several Coop members have stated, as if their libel is decided fact. My Israeli family members are good, loving people. They left their families to fight in a war they did not start or wish for. They fight to protect their children from terrorism and to return our community's kidnapped people.

I walk the streets here, surrounded by antisemitic graffiti on lampposts and buildings. I watch as Jewish students around the country are intimidated and harassed at school, while “peaceful” student protestors are thanked by Hamas and the Islamic Republic of Iran. And I see the insidious rot of antisemitism taking root in our beautiful Coop under the guise of the BDS movement.

I wonder—is this community, this neighborhood, this city, this country, a place where I belong? Should I abandon my home here?

But then, I remember the resilience of the Jewish people. The antidote to the hatred is more community, more connection, and more togetherness, not less. We will lean on our non-Jewish community members who see truth past deception and seek unity over division.

And as Jews have done for over three thousand years, we will lean on each other.

Jonathan Aranov

Taking Issue with Selective Fact-Checks

DEAR EDITOR:

I was disappointed to read the following in an article covering the February GM:

“[Member Jesse Rosenfeld] stated that the BDS website itself describes ‘armed resistance’ and ‘any action, whether one considers it legally or ethically justifiable.’ [Note: This reporter’s review and fact check of the BDS website did not find these words; rather, ‘non-violence’ and opposition to ‘discrimination, including anti-Semitism.’]”

Since the reporter did not fact check any other member statement quoted, it’s surprising to me that Rosenfeld’s line was singled out. It’s doubly surprising to me that the

reporter was unable to find support of armed resistance on BDS's site!

One search of the phrase "BDS armed resistance" led me to the statement put out by BDS on October 7th. The statement does not mention the mass kidnapping and murder of civilians, including infants, nor speak out against brutality and violence, but instead venerates the "powerful armed reaction" of that day, regardless of "how international law regulates it"—exactly as Rosenfeld said.

I encourage members to search and read for themselves. The statement is not hard to find, and it speaks clearly to BDS's perspective on violence and whether Jewish lives should be valued.

There is something uniquely upsetting about reading BDS's statement and knowing that, while it existed in plain sight, the *Gazette* reporter chose to ignore it and instead highlighted BDS's ostensible stance against antisemitism (which, even if it were true in practice, is irrelevant to their stance on armed resistance.)

If I may suggest: *Gazette* readers understand that quotes of members' statements and opinions are just that—statements and opinions. There's no need to fact check what members are saying, especially if fact checkers can't check without bias.

In cooperation,
Tamar Lindenbaum

The Board of Directors Failed Us on April 30

DEAR COOP MEMBERS:

My name is Ramon Maislen, and I'm running for the Board of Directors to ensure that the Coop is not put in legal or financial jeopardy.

Unfortunately, recent General Meetings (GMs) have put us at risk. The actions of PSFC Members for Palestine are detrimental to the Coop and prioritize personal agendas over Coop welfare. They are encouraging members to vote against Coop interests even when they are unrelated to a boycott.

Discussion at recent GMs has been devoted to discussion of boycotting a handful of products out of the thousands we sell rather than actual Coop issues.

At the April 30th GM this had real consequences. The General Coordinators spent months working on policies to strengthen the HR policies after it became apparent that the current policies were outdated and leave the Coop open to litigation. Joe Holtz made a compelling case as to the importance of passing agenda item: "Personnel Policies: Personnel Committee, and General Coordinator Roles." Despite the lack of credible counterarguments, the PSFC Members for Palestine voted as a bloc against the agenda item.

Sadly, what we've seen over the past few months is that a vocal minority is dominating the conversation. I encourage more members to come to the GMs and make sure that your voice is heard.

Critically, I believe that the Board of Directors (BOD) made the wrong decision in voting with the majority on April 30th. The BOD had an obligation to vote in favor of the Personnel Committee agenda item to ensure the Coop doesn't face potential litigation. I hope that you'll vote for Sondra Shaevitz and me (45 years of collective Coop membership) so that we can ensure that voting on agenda items is never tainted by political ideology.

Ramon Maislen

Want to Join Coop Members in an Upstate Summer Community?

DEAR MEMBERS,

Just want to give a shot out to my summer community upstate, a parallel universe to the Food Coop with lots of dual cooperators. Two hours out of the city, Lake Huntington Summer Community is retro (as in salsa and potlucks) and a great place to benignly neglect your kids while reading a good book or napping on a chaise. We're a loosely situated group of bigger houses and cottages on a communal 17-acre property in Sullivan County, a ten-minute drive to the Delaware River and the site of Woodstock. We have a great pool with lifeguard and gated shallow section; a beautiful lake for swimming, boating, and fishing; tennis courts; woods to roam; baseball and basketball; a playground; and, most importantly, a revolving cast of fun-loving kids, from toddlers to teens.

Check us out online at this link.

Hope to see you this summer!

Allie Pennell