

AUGUST 18, 2026

August 18, 2026

Letters to the Editor



ILLUSTRATION BY GABRIEL WILLOW

OUR BATTLE AGAINST PLASTIC

To the Editor,

It's good to see the increased use of compostable produce bags at the Coop. Howev-

er, I have noticed an increase in prepackaged items taking over the produce aisle like a slow-moving cancer.

The plastic bags and clamshells used for prepackaging are difficult, if not impossible to recycle. Also, the prepackaged products are usually priced three to four times higher than their un-prepackaged counterparts.

In addition to being more costly, and environmentally damaging, the prepackaged produce is much more likely to harbor food-borne pathogens. So, where's the logic? Is it some perverse sociopathic logic of consumer marketing that we use to make our purchasing decisions?

Plastic in our bodies, food borne illness and environmental destruction-what does it matter? Produce in plastic clamshells and bags stack so nicely on the shelves.

My logic says ban the plastic clamshells and bags from the produce aisle.

*In cooperation,
John Korber*

A PRODUCE COORDINATOR RESPONDS

Dear John,

Thanks for the letter. We appreciate the feedback.

We're always trying to balance a lot of different priorities, including price, quality, local sourcing, organic options, convenience, and environmental impact. But above all, we pay close attention to what members actually buy—and that data directly shapes our purchasing decisions.

The packaged produce we carry reflects genuine member demand. For example, we

offer both loose and packaged spinach side by side, and members choose the packaged spinach by about 3 to 1. That purchasing pattern tells us what our members prioritize. We stock to meet those real needs while minimizing waste, not the other way around.

This member-driven approach also shapes our sourcing. A good portion of our packaged produce comes from small regional farms we've built relationships with, not just large industrial suppliers. We've chosen these partners specifically because our members' purchasing patterns show they value local sourcing and quality, even when packaged.

On pricing, while some packaged items do cost more than their loose counterparts, that isn't true across the board. The price depends on the product, supplier, and packaging. We're guided by what members will buy and what helps us maintain the quality standards our members expect.

You're also right that much of the plastic packaging labeled recyclable isn't actually accepted through New York City's recycling system, and that's frustrating. We share that concern.

Regarding food safety, the picture is more complicated. Packaging can reduce contamination from repeated handling in open displays, but it also creates environmental costs that have to be considered—and that's a trade-off our members help us navigate through their choices.

We'll continue looking for opportunities to reduce plastic packaging and to offer low- or no-plastic options whenever we can. That's important to us as buyers, and it matters to our members, too. We think it's important to give members real choice, and where we can avoid plastic altogether without compromising quality or creating unnecessary waste, we'll do so. And if members shopping patterns change to reflect less demand for packaged produce, we will adjust our purchasing accordingly.

Thanks again for taking the time to write.

Sincerely,

John Horsman

WHY WE ARE LEAVING THE PARK SLOPE FOOD COOP

Dear Coop members:

By the time you read this letter, I am afraid it will be too late, as we will already be “former members.” We have decided to leave the Park Slope Food Coop under deeply regrettable circumstances; this is *not* a decision we took lightly, nor is it the decision we wanted to make.

We joined the Coop in 2021 because of its commitment to affordable food, sustainability, cooperation and community alignment. Since then, the increasingly politicized and divisive environment surrounding the BDS campaign—and, ultimately, the Coop’s formal decision to boycott Israeli products—has fundamentally changed what this organization means to our family.

This is not about denying other members the right to hold political views that we disagree with! On the contrary, we believe everyone is entitled to hold their views with purpose and conviction. This decision is about the Coop adopting and implementing an institutional political position that directly conflicts with our values, and more so, leaves us feeling both alienated and unwelcome. We cannot, in good conscience, continue contributing our labor, time, or financial support to an organization that has chosen this course.

We are sharing this because fellow members should understand that this decision has

a real human cost. The Coop has made its institutional choice, and we must now make ours.

*Sincerely,
Roni and David Feller*

ronianddave@gmail.com

THE BOYCOTT DEBATE HAS AN AFTERLIFE

Dear Coop members:

Pro-Israel letters are trying to discredit the pro-boycott initiative's solid 2/3rd majority, the largest vote in Coop history. Among their complaints was that there was no pre-vote debate, allegedly meant to silence the pro-Israel side. The reality is that the meeting had a late start, and proceeded glacially slowly. This debate had dominated the *Gazette's* pages for over a decade, and continuously the last two years. No shortage of opinions existed, and opinions were surely solidified. A debate would've mattered little, if at all. Had a debate been held, the meeting could easily have dragged into the early hours; suspending debate made eminent sense.

There was a mention of historical Arab domination of Jews and Christians in the Middle East. It's true that minority populations frequently suffer disadvantages, but the reality is that Jews and Christians fared relatively well among majority Muslim populations, being idealized as "people of the book," i.e., adherents to its earlier revelations. In fact, the development of antisemitism is grounded in European history, marked by the Inquisition and pogroms, and culminating in the Holocaust. It was not until the colonizing thrust of Zionism that real antagonisms arose in the Middle East.

The dominant anti-boycott theme throughout was its appeals to "inclusion" and "uni-

ty”; that otherwise, Jews would “feel unwelcome.” Considering that a fair number of Jews were among the adherents to the pro-boycott position, one wonders how serious are such notions. The “unity” narrative was always a debating point lacking substance. The Coop’s guiding principle is Cooperation, not “unity.” Opinions will differ regardless!

We can expect critical letters to continue, but that doesn’t change or obscure the reality of Israel’s ongoing behavior, which needs no explanation, and for which there’s no valid apology! A boycott is eminently suitable.

David Barouh

DEFEAT OF JOE HOLTZ

Dear Coop members:

I am an old Coop member who knew and worked with Joe Holtz in earlier days. I was really shocked to read of his defeat for a seat on the board of directors—I think he deserves more appreciation and respect than that. Generations change, and this is a sharp reminder of that.

*Sincerely,
Bill Miller*

ETHICAL PURCHASING

Dear Coop Members,

We are PSFC members who voted to remove Israeli products from our shelves in re-

sponse to the Palestinian-led call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS). Many of us have taken the time to study the history, principles, and goals of the BDS movement and believe that supporting the boycott is consistent with the Coop's longstanding commitment to justice and ethical purchasing.

At the same time, we continue to see arguments against the boycott that misrepresent what BDS is intended to accomplish. Most recently, we have seen two recurring misunderstandings.

First, calls for dialogue between Zionists and supporters of BDS confuse two different issues. BDS does not seek to regulate or discourage conversations between individuals. Rather, it calls on institutions to take an ethical stand against systems of oppression through nonviolent economic action. Dialogue and institutional accountability are not mutually exclusive.

Second, highlighting Israeli businesses that bring Jewish and Arab citizens together misunderstands the purpose of the boycott. BDS is not a judgment of individual entrepreneurs or personal relationships. It is a strategy of institutional pressure based on the principle that coexistence without justice cannot produce a just and lasting peace. As the movement has long maintained, genuine peace requires equal rights, freedom, and accountability.

BDS is grounded in international law and in universal principles of human rights. It calls for ending the denial of Palestinians' fundamental rights through nonviolent means. We are proud that our Coop chose to act in solidarity with this movement, and we encourage members who have questions or concerns to learn more about the legal, ethical, historical, and moral foundations of BDS before drawing conclusions about its purpose.

*With compassion,
Christine Schmidt, Larisa Shaterian, Yana Kuchirko, Janna Beckler*

TOWARDS REAL JUSTICE IN PALESTINE

Fellow Coop members,

I write in response to Ramon Maislen's July letter. His focus on the reaction of specific producers to our boycott is a distraction from the bigger picture: the urgency of opposing the genocide in Gaza, the ongoing violence and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank, and the discriminatory nature of the Israel state.

Over 73,000 people have been killed in Gaza since October 7, 2023. The moving concrete blocks of the "yellow line" push residents into an ever smaller area, even as the Israeli military bombards and murders civilians during a so-called ceasefire. In the West Bank, settler terrorist attacks have risen to a rate of 3 per day. The boycott is an absolute necessity, the least we can do to repudiate Israel's criminal actions.

Sindyanna's model of collaborative labor between Jewish and Arab women might seem admirable, but means little when the second-tier status of non-Jews has been explicitly codified into law (via the "Nation-State Law") since 2018: "The realization of the right to national self determination in the State of Israel is exclusive to the Jewish People." In adopting a boycott that covers all products produced in Israel, we do not aim to reward or penalize anyone based on identity, but rather to signal that the system itself is broken.

BDS is a Palestinian-led movement for justice, in line with our mission statement commitment to "avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others", and in line with our BLM-era statement that we support "the dismantling of all systems that propagate and empower systemic racism." As a Black coop member, I hope that those words were not a hollow declaration, written and voted on with a sense of urgency during the acute crisis of 2020 but without a commitment to their deeper and broader meaning.

*In cooperation,
Matt Miller*

GRATITUDE, CALL TO ACTION, AND HOPE

Fellow Members,

I'm so grateful and proud to be a 47-year member of the Park Slope Food Coop, grateful for our mission, for our continuing history of food and social justice activism, grateful for the opportunity to participate in governance, grateful that hybrid meetings have dramatically expanded opportunities to participate in our coop, and now, after years of collective effort, I am so very grateful that our coop has, with the boycott of Israeli goods, returned to the right side of history.

Let our boycott be a catalyst for more action, more involvement in more activism on behalf of Palestinians and all oppressed people. There are so many ways to be involved—by donating to groups like Doctors Without Borders or Palestine Children's Relief Fund or local mutual aid groups. Working with Palestinian Youth Movement on the Architecture of Genocide exhibit reinforced the idea that cultural production is resistance. There are also many smaller local mutual aid groups; ask around.

You can offer support and learn more while reading, listening and watching: local events, on the ground reporting from the West Bank and films. While our taxes are still paying for genocide and mass destruction, we can mobilize to vote for representatives who are determined to stop this. Let's be motivated by the recent congressional primaries in Brooklyn and Manhattan. We can join together to protest, to challenge and to stop the illegal sale of Palestinian land, right here in NYC. On the local front you can also find groups defending neighbors against ICE, helping provide food aid, and offering immigration and tenant support.

We have so much and we can do so much more.

*In Cooperation,
Alyce Barr*

REINVENTING THE WHEEL

To the editor:

Listening to the Environmental Committee's presentation at the July 28 General Meeting, I found myself wishing that committee members be required to read past minutes and other material pertaining to issues the committee is concerned with. So much of what they said sounded like something a past committee has said before, and a past meeting has listened to before.

Thanks for letting me vent!

*Sincerely,
Kathy Hieatt*