

IN MEMORY OF KATIE ZABRONSKY

February 28, 2024

By Thomas Rayfiel



PHOTO BY JUN TAN

Katie Zabronsky, who was a Coop member for only four years but made a lasting impression, died on Nov. 18, 2023. Katie joined the Coop in 2019. She worked mostly in food processing, receiving, and stocking. Her partner, Harry Shock, recalled how: "Katie loved the Coop and all its quirks. She always came home from her shift having purchased something new and intriguing. She dubbed these her 'PoW' or 'Purchase of the Week.' It was a very necessary part of every shop. As friends and family returned to NYC, post-pandemic, they all moved into the neighborhood to be near Katie, and, in turn, Katie persuaded them to join the Coop as well."

This is borne out by the testimonies of her many friends. Liz Hart wrote: "Katie adored the Coop and was a huge champion and spokeswoman for it. Before I even moved to New York she made sure to give me a tour during a visit. Katie was so warm. She loved food, cooking, feeding her friends and family, and would often be heard saying, 'It's from the Coop,' whenever she was hosting."

Another friend, Naomi Sabbah, added: "Katie is the reason I joined the Coop! Every time I went to Katie's she would put a snack out on the table or share a new skincare purchase and laugh when I asked where she got it, responding with a smile and a shrug: 'The Coop!' She was a true, pure member in the best sense, never pressuring me to join, or sticking up her nose at me that I hadn't, just being generous with the joy (and items) the place gave her."

Katie was a social worker with the Sanctuary for Families at Queens Family Justice Center, supporting children and teens who had witnessed domestic abuse. Before that, she had worked with the health care consultant Rabin Martin, partnering with the Gates Foundation to broaden access to maternal immunizations, and studied in Uganda where she supported PDI Uganda, an organization in rural, eastern Uganda that supports children's education.

Diagnosed with ovarian cancer at twenty-six, she underwent surgery and chemotherapy. Ten weeks later, she ran a half-marathon to raise \$25,000 for cancer research at Memorial Sloan Kettering. Despite her illness, she received a Master's degree from

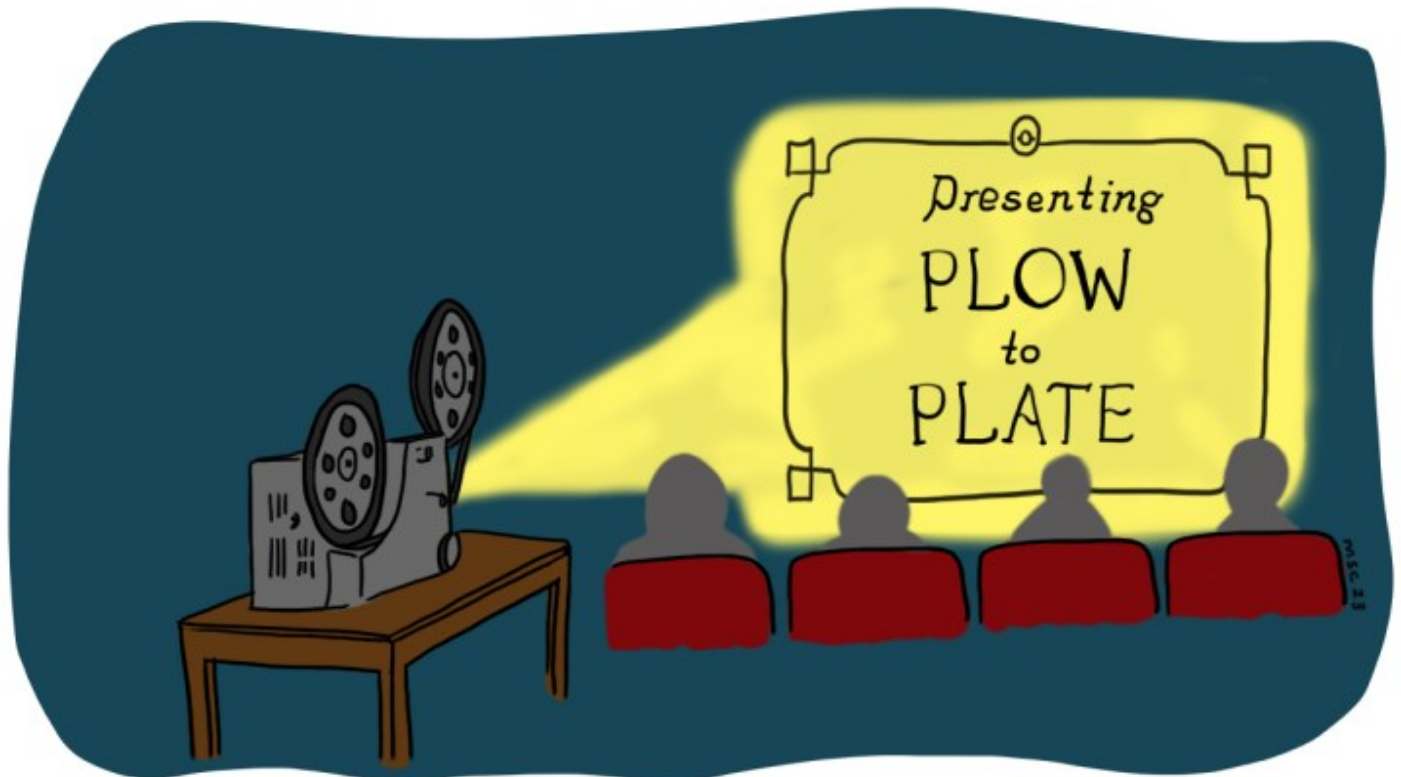
the Silberman School of Social Work at Hunter College.

Katie is survived by her loving parents, Rob and Lorri Zabronsky; her sister, Rachel Zabronsky and brother-in-law, Jake Sabbah (both Coop members); and her partner, Harry Shock (also a Coop member).

During the first few days of COVID, Katie did a hectic shift in the stock room. At one point, a coordinator yelled, “Forget the goji berries! Focus on cheddar cheese!” (Apparently, hard cheese is a good source of protein and does not go bad quickly, so everyone was rushing to buy it.) For Katie, who told this story to many friends, this epitomized the eccentric, hilarious, but also very touching tone of the Coop, one with which she obviously identified.

PLOW TO PLATE FILM SERIES: PLANT PURE NATION

February 28, 2024



By Adam Rabiner

Plant Pure Nation (2015) serves as a companion film to February's feature, *From Food to Freedom* (2023). Writer and director Nelson Campbell is on the same mission—at-tempting to be the Johnny Apple Seed of the modern whole-food plant-based nutrition movement, along with his famous father, Dr. T. Colin Campbell.

Both films take a rigorous scientific approach to proving the benefits of the vegan diet. In last month's film, a crew of type 2 diabetics dined for ten days on a strictly controlled diet while living under the same roof. In this film, a series of similarly structured jump-starts were conducted, but the participants picked up their meals from a central location to take back to their homes. In theory, this may have allowed for more cheating, but pre- and post-medical testing showed that even under these less strict conditions, people lost weight, lowered their cholesterol and reduced their medications.

Despite these similarities, the films are complementary rather than redundant. *Plant Pure Nation* focuses much less on the human drama of those taking part in these jump-starts but rather grounds itself in the political drama of simply trying to spread the good news and healthy benefits of plant-based eating, in barbecue-loving states like Iowa, Kentucky and North Carolina (sometimes referred to as the stroke belt), where agricultural interests hold a lot of power. Nelson Campbell's evangelism is often met with the question, "Why haven't I heard this before?" *Plant Pure Nation* attempts to provide that answer.

The answer, as Nelson discovers, is in political interests and pushback. This should not have surprised him, as his family has been experiencing this for decades. The film goes back fifty years to a 1977 McGovern Committee report that highlighted Dr. T. Colin Campbell's research into the relationship between disease and diet. Back then the meat, egg and sugar industries, along with the Salt Institute, actively undermined the nutrition committee's goals, portraying Dr. Campbell and his supporters as "puritanical do-gooders."

In reaction to this, Dr. Campbell published his now-famous bestseller, *The China Study*, to get the word out to the masses directly since he was being stymied at the top. His son's films are drawn from the same populist model of direct engagement. But Nelson, like his father, first attempted to work within the political system.

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At the request of state Representative Tom Riner, a Democratic member of the Kentucky House of Representatives, Nelson tried to craft House Bill 550, which would have funded a demonstration project on the benefits of a plant-based diet. At first, the bill had strong support, but the reality of politics set in behind closed doors, as agricultural lobbyists, the Kentucky Farm Bureau and other special interests undermined it. However, just as the powers that be could not silence his father, Nelson decided to conduct his pilot project anyway, starting in rural Mebane, North Carolina.

It was around this time that Nelson came up with the name, Plant Pure, which to him denoted nature, clarity and cleanliness. As he assembled his group of sixteen from a cross section of the community—a politician, a business executive, a journalist, and two local cattle farmers (a husband and wife)—the themes and talking points came into clarity. This experiment was not only about eating better, but about taking control away from the hands of industry and government. It was about independence, freedom and liberty. It involved bottom-up control, not top-down authoritarianism.

These five consecutive jump-starts, each a bit larger and more complex than the previous, eventually led Nelson back to Kentucky, where he and Tom Riner hoped to insert a finding of fact about plant-based nutrition into the record. Yet even this modest proposal forms the basis of a nail-biting political drama. While some legislators are clearly in favor, others are more skeptical. One asks if the word “meat” can be appended to the list of good foods which include vegetables, fruits, grains, legumes and

nuts. Dr. T. Colin Campbell had been asked not to come; and Nelson has been relegated to the balcony.

Following the vote, you can see why Nelson Campbell, like his dad, is taking the message directly to the people. The rally for the *Plant Pure Nation* is underway.

Plant Pure Nation, March 12, 2024 at 7 p.m.

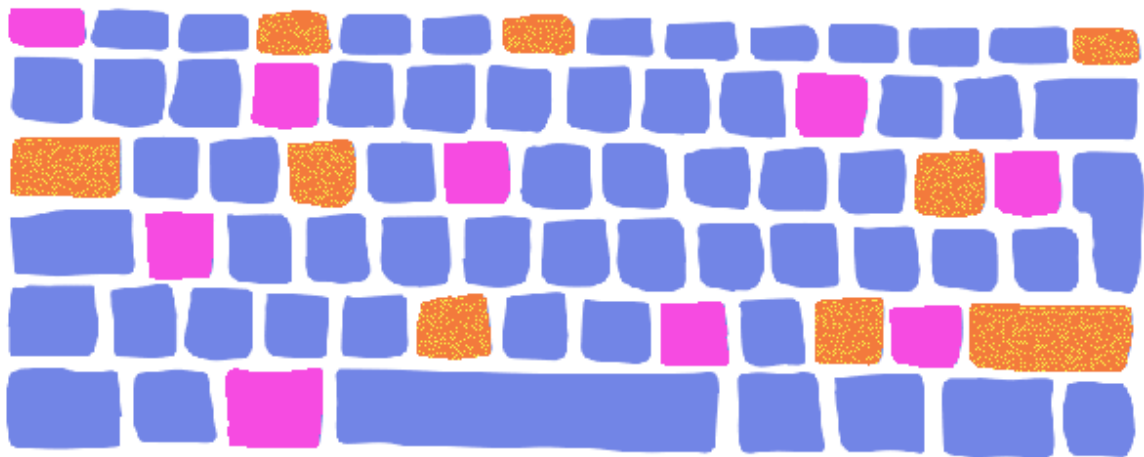
Screening link

To be added to our mailing list for future screening announcements, please email a request to plowtoplate@mail.com.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

February 28, 2024

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Editors' Note: The *Gazette* is pausing the publication of all member letters and member articles related to the war in the Middle East while we revise our submissions policy.

LINEWAITERS' GA-ZINE?

Dear Linewaiters' Gazette,

At the November GM a member asked about the *Gazette* being brought back to a print edition, and the question has stuck with me. The transition to a digital *Gazette* has clearly had many advantages (some of which were covered in detail in an article May 2022), however I agree that something tangible may have also been lost in this move.

The appeal of spontaneously collecting a physical edition while shopping is tempting, and some other recent new publications—such as the *New York Review of Architecture*—have triumphed in their role as primarily physical things, to be folded into pockets or left on tables, and which are full of idiosyncratic sketches and graphics. Even the simple ability for editions of the *Gazette* to be continuously archived at the Brooklyn Public Library to expand on their current collection could be of value.

I understand that the cost and time of producing a traditional print edition in parallel to the digital version might be challenging. However, while walking around Copy Machine Manifestos: Artists Who Make Zines at the Brooklyn Museum this week, it occurred to me that the *Gazette* could learn from the scrappy, improvised and imperfect world of zines. I propose that, for each digital release, someone takes a turn to print out the new articles, letters and graphics, and paste them into a haphazard zine master copy layout. We could photocopy a dozen and leave them by the entrance, and if the stack runs low, we could just photocopy some more! Each edition could be unique and represent the graphic whims of whoever was responsible for the cut and paste job, and each edition would be photocopied to demand—low cost recycled paper, and tailored to how many copies are needed.

Zine-cerely,
Dan Bergsagel

DISBANDING THE COC TONIGHT AT THE GM—AN EXAMPLE OF STAFF OVERREACH AND POOR GOVERNANCE FOR A COOP

To the editors:

I just returned from the January GM a few minutes ago and, as one of the four members of the COC, which was disbanded tonight, I am both a bit relieved yet quite disappointed. Relieved to no longer be in a crossfire of an unwillingness to collaborate and illuminate; disappointed at a very poorly run process.

The agenda items (Oct. and last night) were mostly based on untruths, namely:

- We never attempted to arbitrate committee disputes—that is the job of the Dispute Resolution Committee.
- We never claimed we would reduce staff workload. Not sure where this idea came from.
- We never tried to take on work credit management. That is done by Staff.

After that October discussion—where the COC leader Brian responded to clear up some “misunderstandings”—i.e. false allegations—we thought everything was amended. Then suddenly in early January we discovered there was an agenda item to disband us. A few of us attempted to reach out to the proposing staff member to discuss but were met with a stone wall. No communication.

Earlier today, I took the time to read the Agenda Committee’s memo “How to Develop an Agenda Item for the General Meeting.” Among the suggestions—not evidenced by this process at all, are:

- Write out your proposal or discussion item and check it for clarity.

- Seek background information.
- Publicize your idea.
- Ask for feedback.

It concerns me that this kind of forceful, top-down behavior is at play at the Coop. It also concerns me that the Agenda Committee did not make any effort to fact check the allegations made about the COC in tonight's agenda item—which was filled with falsehoods.

Just a warning—this is a slippery slope. We are a member-owned coop, and our governance should reflect that.

Kristian Nammack

ACCESS FOR ALL COOP FAMILIES

Dear editors,

I've been a member for 10 years, though I spent many of those away from the borough, and then away from the state. When I rejoined last year, I was so happy to find a vibrant and thriving Coop. I brought with me my now 6-year-old daughter, who fell in love immediately with the place, believes (correctly) that you can find "everything" there, and pesters me daily about when she can work a shift. We are passionate about the Coop in our family! I've begun seeking out ways to get more involved, to both give back to and learn from this community that has fed and nurtured us so well. But for reasons I'm sure a lot of parent-members can relate to, I'm limited by work and family obligations. I'd like to attend the General Meetings, but I simply can't. However, if these meetings shifted to a hybrid model that accommodated virtual attendance, this would help so many who want to participate, but currently are not able —

parents, immunocompromised individuals, people who have mobility, health, work, school or any other kind of constraints. I applaud the Coop for recently reinstating masking midweek; it's a powerful way of expressing commitment to and care for each other. The same principle of access and inclusion should be extended to the General Meetings. These, too, should be spaces where all of us feel welcome.

Sincerely,
Genevieve Yue

SOMETHING NEW IS NOT WORKING WELL AT THE PSFC

Dear Coop:

I haven't been able to shop at the Coop for at least the past 30 days, despite having completed four shifts between late September and early January and having two future shifts scheduled. Yes, I had five free passes and they were already used up, because I have a family, and I shop often via bicycle. They did not replenish after the shift I worked in January. Yes, I fell behind in my work shifts. Yes, I have been a member for 30 years but am too young to "retire". Yes, I spoke to Coop staff members about this. I was told that the new system is not going to change because it is working well for the Coop. Attendance for work slots is at an all-time high. Got it. The greater good, for sure. But what about members like me? This is a call to open up a discussion about the need for some leeway, nuance. I kept my money in the Coop during the pandemic when it was struggling and when I had to wait in line for three hours each time that I shopped. Now I need to go to Whole Foods instead of shopping where I have shopped for three decades. There's no good reason that a 30-year member should shop at Whole Foods because of a one-size (doesn't) fit-all policy. I mean, we wear masks two days a week to accommodate certain members. Let's find some creative solutions regarding suspension rules to fit a few more members' needs.

Rebecca Stronger