

IN MEMORY OF MALIKA OWUSU-HASSAN

May 26, 2026





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By Thomas Rayfiel

Malika Owusu-Hassan, for many years a familiar face at the Membership Office, died on January 22 of kidney disease. She was 75. Malika joined the Coop in 2004 and

retired in 2021. In pre-pandemic times, when FTOP (the Future Time Off Program) still existed, Malika “banked” many extra shifts upstairs, answering phones and dealing with members’ queries. Her daughter, Aziza, says, “Working weekly was something that filled the void of not going to work every day. She loved being a part of the Park Slope Food Coop! It was her own special place (where she could get away from the world for a little bit). The Coop made her feel like she was involved in something very important. Plus, she just loved shopping there and bringing home all the healthy and delicious food!”

Jana Cunningham, Membership Coordinator, says Malika worked “as often as she could.” When asked why, Malika replied that she enjoyed helping people. Jana remembers Malika as being, “kind, inquisitive and funny.”

Malika worked for many years as an educator in the public school system, eventually becoming a New York City Board of Education School Psychologist. One of her colleagues at Canarsie High School, Pastor Varrett John Kennedy, was a longtime friend. Regarding her professional career, he recalls:

“Malika had a unique ability to see potential in young people and to nurture their confidence, identity and voice. She served as a faculty advisor to the African American Club and was instrumental in creating a space where students could engage their heritage with pride and purpose. She was both firm and compassionate, holding high expectations while offering genuine care and support. Her presence in the school community was one of strength, authenticity and quiet leadership. She created joy, camaraderie and connection among students. That was Malika: always building community, always bringing people together.”

Aziza underscores this, calling her “a quiet activist,” working for local causes that she hoped would eventually lead to greater change. On a more personal note, when Aziza was young, Malika strongly encouraged her to get involved in the sport of fencing, feeling it would grow to become an important influence on her life. Aziza recently won the Women’s Vet-40 Saber gold medal at the North American Cup championship.

Malika is survived by her youngest brother, Darrall Lafayette; her five children, Mark, Khalil, Sabriyah, Aziza and Queen-Sheba; her nine grandchildren and her eight great-grandchildren.

Aziza adds: "The only thing my mother loved more than making the community a better place was being with her family."

Thomas Rayfiel is the author of eight novels. He has also written "living obituaries" for VICE TV.

FTOP RULES TOO RESTRICTIVE

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Dear Coop,

With the recent return to recurring shifts, I find the Future Time Off Program (FTOP) policy that states you can only schedule two shifts at a time too rigid and not well publicized.

First, it does not appear anywhere in the Workslot Policy Agreement. Second, the two places it does appear—on the "Shift Calendar" web page and Section III, paragraph 7 of the Membership Manual—it is buried in the text and not easy to notice.

More importantly, the PSFC seems to encourage members to add credits to their shift bank credit but then limits members' ability to build up credit by limiting them to two scheduled shifts at a time.

In the Membership Manual, for instance, it states, "You need to work at least one shift per cycle but you are welcome to work extra shifts. Those additional shifts will add

credits to your bank. There is no limit to the number of credits you can have in your bank.” And then adds a little later, “You may have up to two scheduled shifts at one time, with no more than 2 shifts on the same date.” These two statements seem to be at odds with one another.

Moreover, when we accept the Workslot Policy Agreement, we agree that “Whenever possible I will cancel farther in advance, so other members have the opportunity to claim the shift(s).” Here, too, the FTOP policy makes it difficult to do so. For example, I will be traveling in November but cannot cancel my November shift and choose an alternate slot until I work my next shift in September. By that time, I fear the slots that are most convenient for me will be taken.

The system needs to be more flexible. Let’s increase the number of shifts that can be scheduled at one time.

William Yotive