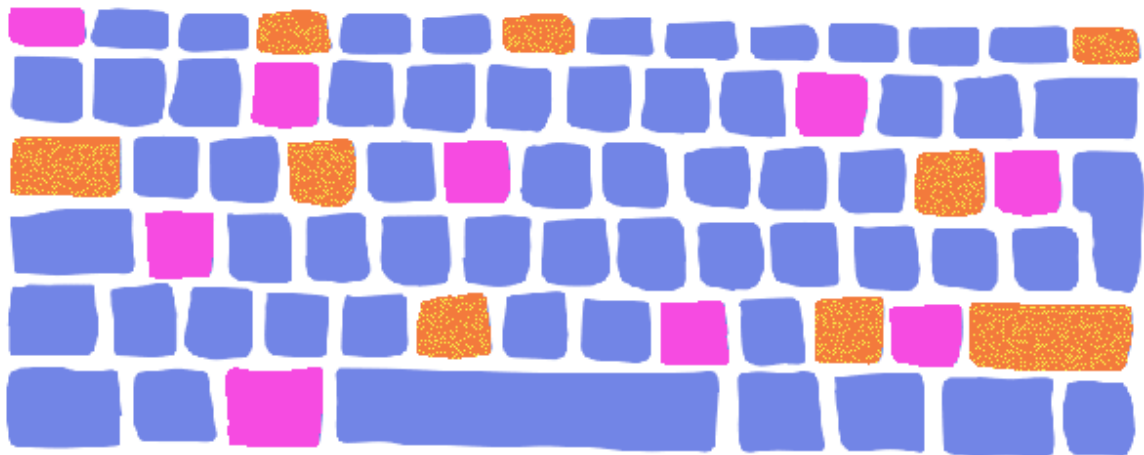


JUNE 11, 2024

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## **CROISSANT INFLATION**

To The Editor:

The croissants got smaller. Likewise, this letter was reduced in size.

*Jonas Geduldig*

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## **GERMAN GRAD STUDENT SEEKS TO INTERVIEW PSFC MEMBERS FOR THESIS ON FOOD COOPERATIVES**

*Editor's Note: As part of our commitment to the International Principles of Cooperation, our Coop often works with people from other Cooperatives and people studying Cooperatives from all over the world. Sadia Rahman attends a university in Germany and would appreciate talking to individual members of our Coop. If you can, please contact Sadia. Her contact information is in the letter below. -Joe Holtz, General Coordinator.*

Dear Members,

My name is Sadia Rahman. I am actively looking for Coop members for interviews who are enthusiastic about enhancing the growth of comprehensive and eco-friendly organic agriculture. I am pursuing my Master of Science (M.Sc) in Transition Management. I am currently involved with a research project (WERTSCHÄTZEN) at the Justus Liebig University (JLU) Gießen on food cooperatives. Please find some more information (in German) on the project website. In the framework of the project, a master thesis will be written about exploring the potentials and challenges of organic and local value chains: a case study on Park Slope Food Coop. In advance I want to share some information about the project: It focuses on strengthening local and organic value chains and is sponsored by the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Our research aims to identify potentials and challenges for the further development and dissemination of food cooperatives in Germany. It also seeks to promote knowledge transfer and networking among stakeholders.

Your shared daily experience and learnings will encourage me to work well with this project. N.B., I am in Germany, and unfortunately, I cannot reach you physically but I am available for an online interview. If you want to encourage me with your knowledge and supervision regarding Park Slope please send me an email at: s.rahman.sarah@gmail.com or sadiasarah1996@gmail.com.

My phone number is +4901783174726 (I am also available on WhatsApp, Botim).

Together we can make this world a better place.

I look forward to hearing from you.

*Sadia Rahman*

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## **AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

Fellow members,

I'd like to acknowledge the moving letter by a Muslim parent in the previous issue. There are moments when we are reminded of a child's unencumbered lens on the world. Their daughter's observation noting the lack of a Ramadan endcap display—and what it said about her aspirational vision for a more open Coop—was one such instance.

Then I saw that the letter was signed anonymously, out of safety. It saddened me for reasons I can't fully enumerate here, but I will offer one: Many recent letters have routinely characterized those who support a boycott of specific Israeli goods as somehow secretly, inherently violent. For Muslim members in particular, we hear decades-old echoes of accusation, discrimination and sanction that still reverberate today. With this in mind, may we as a community reflect on why a fellow member had

to make a choice between identifying as Muslim and sharing their name.

To the parent who submitted the letter: jazakAllah khair, from one Muslim to another.

Sincerely,

*Abdi-Hakin Dirie*

P.S. While I'm here, I also want to acknowledge the great piece on Ramadan dishes and traditions by Leila Darabi, spotlighting other Muslim Coop-ers. Thank you.

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## **DANGEROUS OVERREACH**

Dear Cooperators,

I am deeply troubled by Ramon Maislen's recent letter to the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Maislen is running for the Board of Directors. His message is one of inclusivity and mutual respect. However, his letter suggests something far different. In it, he stated that he felt the current Board had "made the wrong decision" in voting in agreement with the membership on the Personnel Committee proposal at the April GM. (This is standard procedure; the Board acts similarly to the US Electoral College, in that it essentially ratifies the vote of members.) He claimed, without specifying, that failure to pass the proposal would lead to "potential litigation"—though, as I understand it, the Personnel Committee has been understaffed for two years without incurring legal problems. Also without substantiation, he claimed that "political ideology" had "tainted" the procedure for the vote. Most alarming was Maislen's willingness to violate the long-standing neutrality of the Board, which goes against his own assurances, per the minutes of the March GM, that he would follow longstanding voting procedures at the Coop.

I think this is dangerous. We do not always agree on issues at the Coop, but I would hope that we all respect the democratic processes we've established for working through our differences. We deserve board members who will fight to uphold our principles, not run roughshod over them.

Sincerely,

*Jeanette Samyn*

**Editor's Note:** Jeannette Samyn mischaracterizes the Board when she writes that it is like "the Electoral College" and "it essentially ratifies the vote of the members." Plus she says that the Board has a "long-standing neutrality." These statements are not true about the role of the Board, its authority or power. When members vote they are essentially giving advice to the Board, which the Board can accept or reject. Per GM procedures: "Directors are not required to ratify decisions made by the GM, however; they are legally bound to use their business judgment and act in the best interests of the corporation, and if they believe that a decision of the GM is illegal or irresponsible or is not in the best interests of the Coop, they should not ratify it."

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## **ACTUAL HATRED AND DIVISIVENESS**

To the Editor:

Having peacefully canvassed outside our Coop (April 1, 2024) for the boycott of Israeli goods I certainly can attest to hatred and divisiveness within our community referenced in these pages. I experienced both firsthand when a fellow member-owner called me a Nazi, a label I wholly reject. We are a democratic body and the sooner this issue is brought to a vote the better—our commitment to diversity and equality demands no less.

*Damien Neva*

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## **REJECTING ANTISEMITISM AT THE COOP**

Dear Fellow Coop Members,

We are deeply concerned about an anti-Semitic incident that occurred in front of the Coop on May 16.

A Jewish Coop member was canvassing for our group 'Coop For Unity' to help recruit members to fight the antisemitic, violent and divisive BDS movement at the Coop. A person leaving the Coop shouted "Nazi" and "Seig Heil" at them. This incident represents more than reprehensible harassment; it is deeply antisemitic and disturbing.

A letter published in the May 21 issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette* argues that BDS is not inherently antisemitic. While we strongly disagree with that assertion, we feel even more strongly that labeling all criticisms as inherently NON-antisemitic overlooks the real and harmful antisemitism that some BDS supporters propagate.

The Park Slope Food Coop is founded on principles of respect, inclusivity and community. Unfortunately, the recent incident demonstrates that antisemitism is present at the Coop and must be actively confronted. In order to root it out, members who flagrantly exhibit antisemitic sentiments, including the person who perpetrated this recent incident, should be facing appropriate disciplinary action from the Coop as a signal that antisemitism has no place here.

Please stand with us against all forms of hate and ensure our Coop remains a safe and welcoming space for Jewish members. If the aura of BDS continues to linger at the Coop, these incidents will continue to multiply and threaten to disrupt everything the Park Slope Food Coop stands for. It's time to ban BDS from the Coop once and for

all.

If you witness or experience antisemitism at the Coop, please report it to the Dispute Resolution Committee immediately by going to the Membership Office or emailing [foodcoopdrc@gmail.com](mailto:foodcoopdrc@gmail.com).

Signed,

*Tali Rasis, Jonathan Tobias , Jesse Rosenfeld, Sondra Shaievitz, Barbara Mazor, Yuval Inselberg, Maya Bodinger, Ramon Maislen, Joshua Geller, Shahar Yannay, Assaf Ariely, Aaron Karas, Rebecca Lassman, Naomi Bernstein, Kristen Zeligs, Diana Chase, Larisa Fomovsky, Nogah Rotstein, Nathalie Hirschtritt, Tatyana Tcheka, Jamie Alexander Principe, Sylvia Tobias, Allison Halpren, Bozhena Vistman , Maor Gordon-Guterman, David Feller, Elian Jeifez, Harvey Lang, Evan Abel, Forrest Zlochiver, Jason Kahan, Chana Balk, Ted Nusbaum, Dalit Shalom, Ivona Hertz, Roni Feller, Rebecca Gladstone, Jackie Loeshelle, Perry Swergold, Diana Maislen, Jordan Feldman, Leah Rosenblum, Marc Cohen, Abby Greenbaum, Simone Safyer, Marina Bank, Tzach Roitenberg, Marina Bank, Susan Miller, Regina Beider, Aaron Miller, Jonathan Aranov, Josh Suskewicz, Michelle Feldman, Daniel Alter, Ashley Abess, Rachel Abrams, Lorin Goldhirsch, David Engelman, Mindy Werner, Boris Granolic, Sunny Koll, Adam Sussi, Diana Maislen, Dave Swartz, Daniel Gustafson, Adam Price, Rachel Suskewicz*

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## **AGAINST THE WEAPONIZATION OF PEACE**

Dear Fellow Members:

Upon reading letters claiming that those supporting a boycott of Israeli products have “threatened the inclusive culture of the Coop” and are “divisive,” I couldn’t help but think of Dr. King’s “Letter from a Birmingham Jail.” In it, King airs his frustration with those who prefer “a negative peace which is the absence of tension to a positive

peace which is the presence of justice.”

A similar dynamic has now emerged in the Coop. Members advocating for the Coop to join Palestinian civil society’s Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign in light of Israel’s latest genocidal operation in Gaza have been met with calls for “unity” and “inclusion” and lamentations that politics have “threatened the delicate fabric of our cooperative.” Legal scholar and human rights lawyer Yuvraj Joshi refers to this dynamic as the “weaponization of peace,” in which calls for peace “primarily function to stifle the pursuit of racial justice” and maintain an unjust status quo. BDS advocates are blamed for sowing tensions by members who use words like “peace” and “unity” to mask a tacit apologism for Israel under “a veneer of virtue.”

BDS supporters did not create this tension at the Coop; it was already there. I feel that tension, for instance, when I wait in line, crossing my fingers that I don’t get sent to the cashier proudly wearing his IDF t-shirt. Tension, however, doesn’t have to be seen as something negative. It has the potential, as Dr. King states, to be a “constructive nonviolent tension that is necessary for growth.” But fulfilling that potential requires truth telling and uncomfortable but necessary conversations, not hiding behind hollow calls for “peace,” “unity” and “inclusion.”

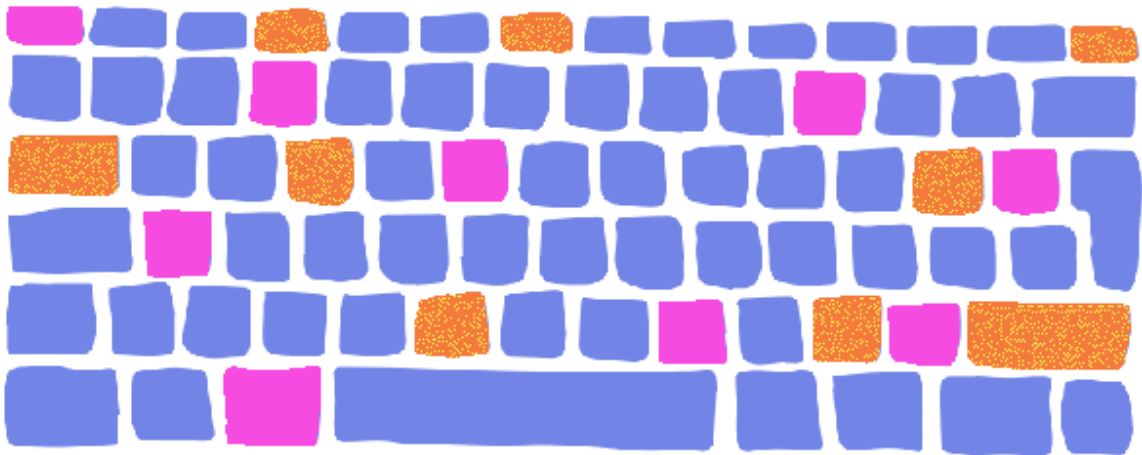
*Corbin Laedlein*

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MAY 21, 2024

June 11, 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*

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## **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,  
Stewart Pravda*

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## **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.*

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## **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 under 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*

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## **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*

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## **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.)

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## **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*

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## **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.

## **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*

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## **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 demand 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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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**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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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## **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*

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## **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 30<sup>th</sup> 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 30<sup>th</sup>. 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*

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**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!*

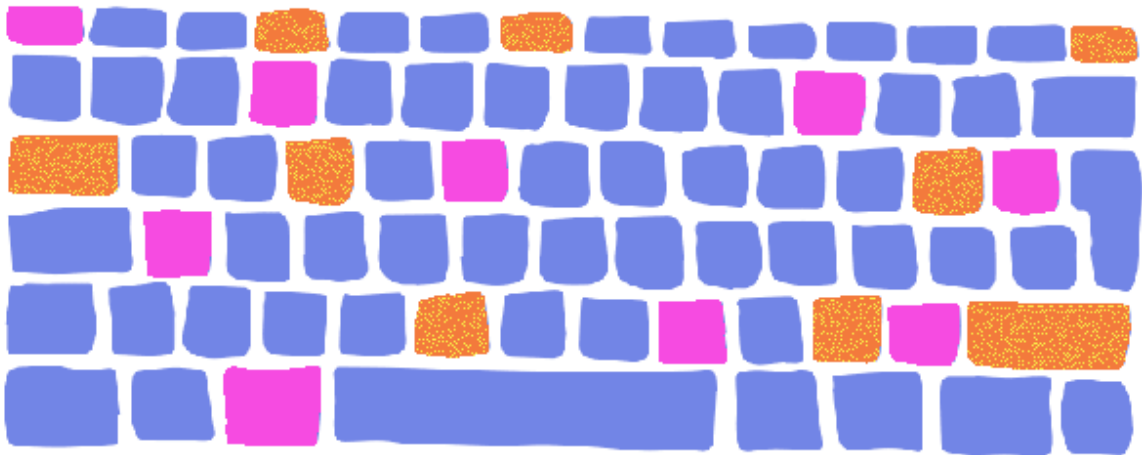
*Allie Pennell*

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APRIL 9, 2024

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



PROVENANCE PLEASE FOR ALL COOP PRODUCTS

Dear Fellow Members:

Can we add country of origin as dedicated information on shelf labels? On housewares, on dry goods—the Coop is about educated choices. I know we make a sign

when we're proud of something, usually involving fair trade, but I would appreciate this information for all items, especially as the tech team programs labels like we now have in produce.

Thank you,  
*Lisa Guido*

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## REFINING MEMBER USE OF THE PAGING SYSTEM

Dear Fellow Members:

While many of the initiatives to improve the Coop's sonic experience, from a "Shift DJ" discussion item at a GM a few months ago to a PSFC Spotify channel, are music-oriented, there is one simple thing that every member who is able can do to go easier on the ears of your fellow shoppers and workers.

Our awesome paging system enables anyone using it to be heard using our "inside voices," but there is an enormous difference between ending a page with a finger and the amplified collision of plastic that blasts everyone at the Coop when a page is ended by hanging up the phone.

For many, this is one more piece of noise pollution, like sirens and hydraulic bus brakes, that we simply tune out. But for others, it is an unnecessary aural assault that can be avoided with a small amount of mindfulness.

Please. If you use the paging system and you are able, use your finger to hang up the quiet way.

Thanks,  
*Brian Shuman*

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## WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR WORKING PARENTS?

Dear Editor:

Two years ago, the world—and our member work requirements—asked us to return to a version of the “way it was.” A single mother of two—as hardcore a Food Coop member as you can get—told me she was leaving.

“What am I supposed to do?” she said.

Many families feel abandoned by the new policies of the Coop. With work, school, meals and bedtime, they find it increasingly difficult with the online platform to even schedule a shift, let alone worry about who'll care for their children while they do it. This leads to an increased work debt many are reminded of every time they need to buy food for their families.

“Why must I ask permission to shop at a store I've been a member of for over 10 years for having a lapsing grace period after being suspended for not doing shifts that are impossible to schedule?” is a sentiment I've heard more than once.

In the past few years, I've spent a lot of my (limited) free time and energy working to bring back childcare, and when we voted as a community, the item overwhelmingly passed. Then we hit a hiccup: our childcare insurance policy is impossible to renew.

So, what now? We've already lost many families, and we continue to fail to serve young families who are members, especially those in single parent households. The end of childcare should not mean the end of support for working member families.

As we move into the next 50 years of cooperation, we need to ask ourselves how will equity, in addition to cost efficiency and convenience, shape our idea of membership

and work requirements? How can we make it easier for families with young children to complete their required shifts?

*Lauren Belski*

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## HUMAN-SIZED PORTIONS, PLEASE

Dear Gazette:

Buying four bags of smoked paprika, three bags of peppercorns, five bags of parsley and so on, I would suggest a larger serving size in our member packed goods. If we could have a number of larger sizes of bags so I don't clear out the tamari roasted pepitas and smoked paprika in one run, I'd feel less guilty and I think many members with larger households would be happier, plus fewer wasted bags.

Here's my Coop spiced pasta recipe for a quick easy meal (feeds four):

### **Ingredients:**

2-3 tbs of parsley

2-3 tbs of oregano

3-4 tbs of garlic

1-2 tsp of Aleppo pepper

Salt to taste

Freshly ground pepper to taste

½ cup of olive oil or whatever else you like

1 lb of pasta (I prefer Molisana brand but whatever works, gluten free can be fine too)

Optional: Fresh grated Parmesan or Romano cheese

### **Steps:**

Boil 7 cups/1.7 liters of water in electric kettle and transfer to pot or boil on stove.

Pour pasta in water and give an initial stir, cover and bring to boil, drop to lowest flame that keeps it boiling, maybe smallest burner. Stir every couple of minutes so it doesn't get stuck together.

When the pasta reaches correct tenderness (which is usually indicated via the time shown on the pasta package), drain water over another vessel to save some pasta water.

Dump pasta in a big bowl, pour olive oil over it and add in  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{3}{4}$  cup of the pasta water.

Pour all the spices in and stir for a bit till everything is coated with oil and spices.

Serve into bowls and add black pepper, salt and/or cheese as needed.

Enjoy,

*Mark Paperno*

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NATIONAL GRID? HA! NATIONAL GREED'S MORE LIKE IT.

To the Editor:

A Coop member since the 1980s, I raised my family in the neighborhood, and one of the changes I've become keenly aware of is the skyrocketing cost of utilities. Their rates are putting New Yorkers in debt; the greed of National Grid hurts us all. It makes exorbitant profits off captive ratepayers while poisoning those who live in their shadow with their product, a potent greenhouse gas.

It's unconscionable that utilities across the country are building infrastructure we don't need, don't want and can't afford at a time when the city and state of New York are passing legislation that will wean us off this high-emissions fossil fuel completely by 2050, a few decades into the future.

We must do this to have a livable planet. Yet, seeing the end of business as usual, National Grid is milking the system as fast as it can, expanding pipes and infrastructure because that's where their profits lie. Money pours into the purses of executives and investors while the public struggles to pay bills. And methane, the main component of "natural" gas, is 86 times the heat-trapping gas as carbon dioxide, when measured over a 20-year period. We now experience unhealthy emissions in the air and from our stoves and pay exorbitant fees at the same time—all of which is contrary to the spirit that we stand for.

But we can do something.

While our Coop was established to provide healthy food at affordable prices, it's up to us to stand up to National Greed and oppose their latest rate hike proposal, which translates to over \$30/month more per household or a total of \$3.8 billion. To make your voice count, call your legislators and Governor Hochul, and demand they pass the NY HEAT Act, S2016, which would limit utility bills for low- and moderate-income ratepayers to six percent of income.

*JK Canepa*

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A NOVEL IDEA: BOYCOTTS AT THE INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

Fellow Coop members,

Why spend the time, money, and emotional energy on renting out a large space, hir-

ing security, and debating a contentious issue endlessly when there is another possibility?

The people in favor of boycotting Israel would like to see their beliefs and shopping decisions forced on others. As a democratic institution, why are we looking for imposed mandates as solutions to divisive product issues when we have individual shopper decisions as a freer, more representative alternative?

I propose a novel idea: the individual boycott. What could be more democratic than each shopper making their own purchasing decisions based on their unique backgrounds and political persuasions? Products under minimal turnover thresholds due to these individual boycott decisions could then be removed from shelves.

Let's allow members to "vote" through their purchases, and we can avoid this whole *balagan* (commotion). How many of us really want to ruin an evening of our lives debating the conflict in the Middle East? Believe me, faster than you can say *gefilte*, I'll be the first to schlep my tuchus to whichever hapless venue the Coop finds to host a vote on the topic. But do I want to do that when I could be sitting on my couch munching on Bamba? Not really.

Do you want to single out the only Jewish state because you believe it to be the world's greatest evil as it fights a defensive war to return its hostages from a barbaric terrorist organization? Be my guest! YOU do not need to buy products from Israel.

I, for one, will proudly continue to stock my cart with Sabra hummus until the end of my days. Please, let's stop with this bupkis and focus on what unites our community instead.

*Jonathan Aranov*

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## POLITICS ARE PERSONAL

To the Editor,

I am dismayed to learn that the Coop and the *Gazette* are once again putting politics before the cooperation and respect that the Coop has embraced since its founding.

I have been a member for over 20 years, and it was this feeling of community, combined with the quality of food and respect for farmers and the environment that has made me proud.

I am a Jew who strongly supports the Palestinian cause. I show my support in many ways—personal ways. I don't need the Coop to tell me what products to buy or what products to boycott. I urge the Coop to permanently table this discussion. Sadly, if this political battle is allowed to rage at meetings and in the *Gazette*, or worse, if the Coop begins banning products based on political considerations, I will have to resign my membership.

In cooperation,

*Helene Davis*

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## BDS AND THE INTERNATIONAL PRINCIPLES OF COOPERATION

Dear Coop Members,

While I disagree with many points in Joe Holtz's recent Coordinator's Corner column, this letter addresses only his unsupported claim that the Coop can best "welcome"

members by avoiding a vote on boycotting Israeli products. How can anyone anguished over Israel's genocide in Gaza (including, by the way, Palestinian members) feel welcomed by Joe's preferred approach?

Writing "on behalf of the General Coordinators," Joe insists that a BDS boycott would transgress the International Principles of Cooperation. He paraphrases the first IPC principle as "essentially stat[ing] that coops welcome people" from divergent backgrounds. The actual language is: "Co-operatives are voluntary organizations, open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political or religious discrimination." Joe relies on the slippery word "welcome," used in the sense of "make comfortable." But being free from discrimination has nothing to do with being sheltered from controversy. If a boycott is enacted, the Coop will remain just as open to members who dislike that provision as it currently is to BDS advocates. A healthy cooperative must be resilient enough to accommodate serious disagreements, using democratic methods to decide a course of action.

Broadly hinting at the GCs' distaste for those methods, Joe writes: "Regardless of [a potential] vote's outcome, thousands of members could feel unsupported by their Coop and may choose to withdraw their membership." These are scare tactics, given that a tiny, vocal group of people desperate to shield Israel from legitimate criticism appears to constitute the "anti" side of the debate. Joe correctly notes that "The GCs... are obligated to support the Coop's democratic processes." I urge them to take their thumbs off the scale as we address this vital matter.

*Jan Clausen*

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BOYCOTTING A BOYCOTT

Dear Editors:

Letters, opinions related to the Hamas war are wholly inappropriate and must be rejected.

Letters, opinions related to Hamas's terrorism and war are wholly inappropriate and must be rejected.

Boycotts, especially those against those that FIGHT anti-American, anti-Western Jihadi terrorism have NO PLACE in Park Slope.

We've had ENOUGH division and polarization in America, in American Politics, in Park Slope, and in the COOP.

THANK YOU FOR REJECTING any such offensive and objectionable initiatives.

*J. Anthony Levy*

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## INCLUDE MEMBER INPUT IN LETTERS POLICY CHANGES

To the Editors:

As a group of proud Jews particularly affected by *Gazette* standards, we feel that your Letters policy changes required input from us. We needed to be consulted on your new standards for Letters to the Editor and Member Contributions so that the new standards would allow all members to see in print that we feel welcome at our own Coop.

You made clear with your suspension of letters that content in letters and contributions are a very real problem to be considered, and we agree one hundred percent. A

respectful dialogue between the Gazette editors and our group in the same room would have been productive.

Instead, the Editors took about a week, seemingly without consulting anyone but themselves.

That Israel is criticized is not the issue. Israel is subject to more legitimate criticism by Israelis than anyone else. Yet we read a great deal of illegitimate criticism in the Gazette, and our harsh and deadly history shows us the veiled anti-Semitism underneath. Some of it is not veiled at all, just taking new forms that may be unrecognized for now by others. Our group cannot know what is legitimately offensive to other Jews and other groups of people in general until we are told. And others cannot know what is legitimately offensive to us unless they are told. More dialogue, not less, can bridge this gap in understanding.

The only litmus test in this regard for submissions to the Gazette is whether a Coop member feels unsafe and/or unwelcome in the Coop. This group of proud Jews have collectively felt both since October 7th of 2023.

*Jesse Rosenfeld (+150 signatories)*

### **Editor's response:**

The change in policy regarding letters was further amended in early March. Letters and member contributions concerning the ongoing violence in the Middle East and its potential impact on the Coop are no longer restricted.

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A RESPONSE TO ALLEGATIONS OF OVERREACH

Dear Members,

I would like to respond to Kristian Nammack's February 28 letter on the subject of the vote to dissolve the Committee Oversight Committee (COC).

Mr. Nammack charges that the vote was based on "untruths." Having witnessed the formation and actions of the COC as a member of the Agenda Committee until October of 2023, I would like to address the alleged "falsehoods."

Firstly, he asserts that the COC "never attempted to arbitrate committee disputes—that is the job of the Dispute Resolution Committee." That is incorrect; the DRC concerns itself with the actions of individuals, not committees. The COC's own previous description of its mission on the Coop website declared it would serve as "a liaison between committees, members and staff," suggesting that the COC would indeed try to mediate between various groups.

Secondly, he says that the COC never claimed that it would reduce the staff's workload. This was a part of the original proposal passed at the January 2022 GM: "Importantly, the proposal is intended to increase the ability of committees to reduce staff work."

Thirdly, the COC did attempt to take on work credit management. In response to the Structure and Reporting Requirements for New Coop Committees at the April 2022 GM, the COC again declared its mission: "Supervise all committee reports and requirements including scheduling updates and tracking work credits." Left unaddressed and unresolved was that the Coop already had systems in place for reporting all work credit. Even so, further encroachments upon staff time and member privacy occurred when the COC took it upon itself to try to inspect the past work records of thousands of members, not just those on Initiative committees. The purpose of these investigations was unclear, but the inappropriateness of this endeavor, the lack of any mandate and the enormous demands on the staff were suggested at the GM.

Mr. Nammack ignores why the resolution to disband the COC passed by a near 3 to 1 margin. As staff member Jana Cunningham's presentation made clear, the COC failed

to perform its mission to have committee members of both Essential and Initiative committees report to the Gazette, GM, and website their information and activities. Instead, the COC took upon the task of forming a complaint desk and investigating the decisions made by Essential committees. There was no language anywhere in the final item approved by the GM to authorize these activities. It was only after the October 2023 GM that the COC removed from the Coop website its self-declared mission to “investigate committee activities as requested.” The COC’s staff liaison, Joe Holtz, has never explained why this language appeared on the website in the first place or why it was promptly removed after Ms. Cunningham called our attention to it at the October GM. Notably, he didn’t defend the COC’s activities at either GM where the fate of the committee was being determined.

As was her prerogative, Ms. Cunningham took the feedback she received at the October GM and modified her item to specify for a full dissolution of the Committee Oversight Committee. Surely, the January GM and Mr. Nammack’s letter make clear that, given the COC’s gross overstepping of its stated purpose, she was right to do so. Casting doubts on a longtime and highly respected staff member who went far beyond the call of duty to do what she felt was right for the Coop, Mr. Nammack has provided only further justification for disbanding the Committee Oversight Committee.

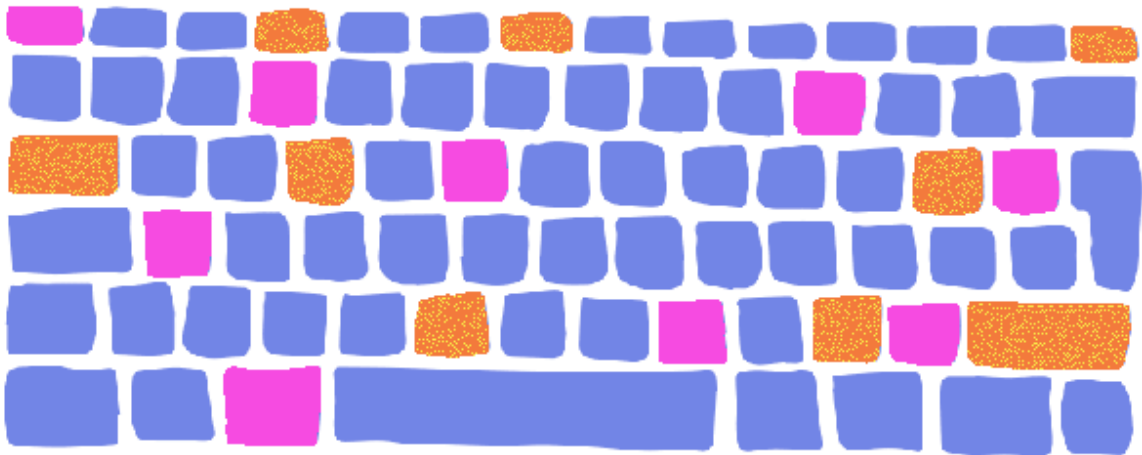
In cooperation,  
*Cynthia Payne*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Editors' Note: The *Gazette* is ending its pause on the publication of member letters and articles related to the war in the Middle East. As is the case for letters on all topics, letters should be no more than 300 words in length. The Letters Editor reserves the right to run a representative selection of letters on any given topic, in the event multiple letters make identical points.

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## ARE YOU TOO INDULGENT WITH YOUR PLASTIC BAG USE?

Dear Coop,

10:30am. Doing my shift at the Coop. Checkout. My first client of the day, a young man with a hat comes to the checkout, and says “Hi,” timidly. He has a light basket, full of fruits, cereal bars, grains and pasta. Apples in a plastic bag, bananas in a plastic bag, oranges in a plastic bag. How can I discretely convince him not to pack the fruits he will peel before eating in a plastic bag?

11am. A smiling elderly woman. She’s cold and mentions proudly that she’ll be very happy to cook a soup and a chicken broth, when she gets home. She bought carrots, celery, celeriac, beets, leeks and chicken. All in separate plastic bags. How can I kindly convince her not to pack her vegetables in plastic bags?

11:30am. A tall man with broad shoulders rushes to checkout. No time to say hello, no time for a smile. Four bagels, four plastic bags. How can I politely convince him he may not need so many?

12:00pm. A jovial man arrives, loaded with two big full baskets, and asks me to check out them out separately, with two different receipts. He tells me that he shops for a neighbor who broke his arm. Bags of cereals, bags of dry fruits, bags of bananas, bags of carrots, bags of potatoes, bags of sweet potatoes, bags of beans, bags of zucchinis, bags of eggplants, bread in a bag, eggs in a bag, pork in a bag. How can I gently convince him to rethink his approach?

12:30pm. A couple with a beautiful baby. They seem tired but fulfilled. They help each other, one unloading the basket, the other packing: plastic bags in a plastic bag. How can I softly suggest alternatives?

*Nathalie Van Braekel*

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*The following letters were originally submitted for publication in the February 27 issue of the Gazette:*

## OUR COOPERATIVE NATURE REMINDS US: BOYCOTT

Fellow members,

Food—like art, science and sport—is political, simply on the basis that it is inseparable from human affairs. The Coop has naturally understood this truism, as evident from our history of boycotts. And so, as I read recent letters arguing against a boycott on Israeli goods, I cannot help but wonder if at some point we have lost part of our progressive spirit.

Namely, vague appeals to “keep the peace” (and, I sincerely ask, for whom?) strike me fundamentally as calls to place civility over morality. All they do is center our mere want for oblivious comfort over the urgent need to reckon with what’s happening. The counterfactual I sadly entertain is that if only American civil society—the Coop included—had held Israel accountable when it was imperative, perhaps the enormous loss of life we continue to witness could have been averted. Tragically, the borne-out reality is genocide.

I’m thinking of a friend of mine from Gaza who was raised as a farmer. Even before the current crisis, Israel would besiege their family farm every few years. Greenhouses, countless crops, the family home—all lost. Each time, they’ve managed to rebuild for the survival of their family and community, as they are endeavoring to do once again.

With them in my thoughts, I ask us to keep a humble perspective. I myself come from

a place recovering from war. Our community at the Coop is beyond fortunate to be in safety and abundance. We will be fine. Instead, fellow shoppers, think (and speak) about Gaza. A boycott is not only principled—it's the least we can do.

*For a just peace,  
Abdi-Hakin Dirie*

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## TO HELP THE COOP COOPERATE, WE NEED TO TALK ABOUT BDS!

Dear Coop members:

Much of the discourse around a boycott will likely revolve around the conflict itself. Here, I'd like to put that charged issue aside and point out the immense importance this conversation has to the functioning of the Coop in general.

The PSFC mission statement states: "We seek to maximize participation at every level, from policy-making to running the store." Our mission statement sets this lofty goal, but for years we have been falling short. A typical General Meeting sees less than 1% of members turn out to make their voices heard. Compare this to the last time BDS came up: nearly 10% of members showed up to engage in the discussion. While the issue is undoubtedly contentious, this level of engagement is healthy for the democratic process, as is learning to discuss charged issues in respectful ways.

Due to increased engagement demands, members are pushing for GM's to become hybrid. Currently, the maximum capacity for our GM's is around 240 people, meaning less than 2% of the Coop can participate on any given night. This is a structural barrier to creating a thriving democratic institution.

Hybrid meetings would increase our capacity for engagement while enhancing accessibility for our disabled and older adult members, working parents, students and

those with limited capacity in their schedules. Such a foundation would bring the Coop into the 21st century, allowing it to fulfill its democratic ideals for generations to come.

*Moriah Engelberg*

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## IN SUPPORT OF DEMOCRACY AT THE COOP

Dear members,

Many of the arguments against a PSFC boycott of targeted Israeli goods rest on the idea that voting on the issue would be dangerous for the Coop. While some of these claims intentionally mischaracterize the boycott movement as violent, others may be grounded in genuine concern. For those who worry that the Coop can't withstand conflict, I'd like to share my experiences canvassing with PSFC Members for Palestine.

Many members I've spoken with have been excited to sign our petition. One said, "nothing else would have made me stop!" One person engaged with me for several minutes before calmly stating, "I strongly oppose this." No one was hurt in the disagreement! My most memorable interaction was with a woman who told me that signing our petition was emotional for her because she had been part of the debate in the past organizing against BDS at the Coop and had done a lot of work and learning since then.

I was moved that she shared this, and since then I've been thinking about the bravery of changing one's mind, and how often it is necessary for progress. When I was growing up, many Democrats opposed gay marriage; many people who now view MLK and Nelson Mandela as heroes once saw them as terrorists. Our progress beyond these backward ideas is largely due to activism, conversation, and the democratic process. We may not all agree on the strategy of using our money and collective voice to

stand against Israel's oppression of Palestinians, but if we believe in democracy and progress we must be allowed to engage. My interactions with Coop members have shown me that we are capable of participating in democracy, even when a topic is challenging.

*In cooperation,  
Sophie Glickman*

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## CENSORSHIP WON'T SOLVE ANYTHING

To the editor:

There have been calls to censor members who want to boycott Israeli products. For example, the January *Linewaiters' Gazette* featured arguments that the Coop should refuse to publish op-eds that promote BDS.

BDS aside, it would be wise to remember the Coop's roots—we are a radical experiment in direct democracy. The statement of cooperative identity says Coops “are democratic organizations controlled by their members, who actively participate in setting their policies and making decisions.” Not only do our principles embrace active input by members; democratic deliberation is at the core of how we function. Democracy can be messy and uncomfortable, but silencing those we disagree with will not quell that discomfort. A thriving democratic institution tolerates dissent and creates space for a variety of different perspectives.

The common response to that argument is that our democratic principles shouldn't apply to hate speech. This argument rests on the notion that boycotting Israeli products is a violent display of anti-Semitism. As a Jew, and someone who is committed to fighting for justice, I care deeply about combating hate in all forms. Anti-Semitism is all too real and on the rise. Yet, fundamentally I don't believe boycotting Israeli prod-

ucts is anti-Semitic.

A useful working definition of anti-Semitism is acts of hatred, hostility or prejudice targeted toward Jews due to their identity. Firstly, boycotting is not an act of hatred; it is an act of nonviolent civil disobedience against governmental policy. Secondly, a boycott of Israel is not being called for due to the religious or ethnic identity of Israelis. It is a direct response to atrocities being committed against Palestinians.

On contentious issues, regardless of our opinions, we must fight the instinct to censure those we disagree with and let the democratic process unfold.

*Dan Kaminsky*

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## NO, A BOYCOTT DOESN'T SINGLE ISRAEL OUT

To the Editors:

In a recent edition of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, members argued that a vote to boycott unfairly singles Israel out when there are many extremist regimes in the world. Yes, there are many oppressed peoples worldwide. If those making this argument are concerned about them, they should propose boycotts against other oppressive entities too. Discussing BDS doesn't mean we can't also extend the boycott conversation to promote justice and liberation in other geographies.

The idea that we are singling out Israel overlooks PSFC's rich tradition of boycotting products (or companies) from countries perpetuating injustice. The Coop boycotted South Africa for decades to protest apartheid. We boycotted Chile during the years of the Pinochet dictatorship. In 1995, we boycotted products from Colorado when it passed sweeping anti-LGBTQ+ legislation. In 2004, we boycotted Coca-Cola for their record of mistreating workers. We boycotted Domino Sugar and Flaum Appetizing

products over their labor practices. We've pulled our money from Citibank over their support of the Dakota Access Pipeline. These are only some of the boycotts the Coop has voted for in its 50-year history.

Building on this tradition, Israel's actions demand that we have a membership-wide conversation about BDS. Since October 7, Israel's U.S.-funded military assault on Gaza has killed at least 27,708 Palestinians, including at least 11,500 children. At least 67,317 people have been wounded. 10,000 are missing under the rubble. Horrifying as these numbers are, they will only have grown by the time you read this letter. Gaza is on the brink of famine. Israel is blockading life-sustaining supplies and deliberately destroying hospitals. BDS is a non-violent movement to put pressure on Israel to stop this devastation. It is morally imperative that the PSFC membership discusses it openly.

*Zahra Khalid*

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## BDS DEBATE WASTES COOP RESOURCES

Dear *Linewaiters' Gazette*:

A group calling itself "PSFC Members for Palestine" are exploiting Coop resources to promote the anti-Israel BDS movement. They are wasting their time and the time of our coordinators and GM attendees by insisting the coordinator pursue securing a location for an item [a boycott of products made in Israel] that has no chance of passing the 75% boycott threshold.

The results from the January Harvard CAPS/Harris Poll show this group is out of touch with how the majority of Americans view the conflict. It is folly to assume the diverse Coop population would differ significantly from these results.

The murders, beheadings, rapes, mutilations and kidnappings committed by Hamas on October 7 are considered to be terrorist attack by 80% of the respondents, and 74% believe Hamas is genocidal. Seventy-five percent say the attack on Israel was not justified. Eighty percent support Israel over Hamas. Sixty-nine percent think Israel is trying to avoid civilian casualties. Most importantly, 79% think Hamas needs to be removed and 67% think there should be a ceasefire only after the hostages are released and Hamas is removed from power.

The letter on the group's website implies support for the opposite of the above-stated positions.

If this group truly cared about human rights they would be advocating for co-existence, Palestinian democracy, removal of the tyrannical Hamas kleptocracy and release of the hostages. But they don't. They should not be permitted to further abuse Coop resources. Their behavior is very uncooperative.

*Barbara Mazor*

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## A COOP BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI GOODS CAN MAKE WAVES

Dear Editors:

From the Montgomery bus boycotts to apartheid South Africa, boycotts are a non-violent, effective tactic in achieving justice. For those concerned about the genocide in Gaza yet argue that a Coop boycott wouldn't make an impact, let us not underestimate PSFC's reach.

Boycotts withhold money as a means of political action. We stock over 20 Israeli products. Based just on Soda Stream sales, it likely exceeds \$100,000 annually. A boycott begun last decade would have redirected \$1 million away from the Israeli military. We

can find new suppliers closer to home and more aligned with our principles.

A boycott is about much more than money. The Coop is a well-respected institution. In 2012, when BDS last came up at the PSFC, it made national and international news. Prestigious papers like the *New York Times* covered the story. Then-Mayor Bloomberg and other elected officials weighed in. Many people and institutions are interested in our little Coop.

The megaphone the Coop holds isn't just aimed at the press. In Congress, PSFC is represented by Dan Goldman, who has refused to call for a ceasefire and voted to censure Rashida Tlaib. A boycott would signal he is not aligned with the constituents and institutions he represents. Some of the most powerful people in the world, Hakeem Jeffries and Chuck Schumer, live mere blocks from the Coop and neither have even called for a ceasefire. This proposed boycott can show our elected that Brooklynites stand for peace and justice.

A Coop boycott isn't just a drop in the bucket; ripples create waves!

*Ann Schneider*

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## BDS DEBATE THREATENS SAFETY OF SOME COOP MEMBERS

Dear Editors:

Following the horrific racially motivated murder of George Floyd and other tragedies, it was heartening to see the coop swing into action to support our Black community members. The Coop adopted a strong statement rejecting racism in all its forms, and a squad was formed to address issues of unconscious bias at the coop. Sadly, this compassion and support has not extended to our Jewish community members.

Since the barbaric atrocities committed in Israel on October 7 by terrorists, and the resulting massive explosion of anti-Semitism and horrific violence against Jews worldwide, a group of Coop members have inexplicably decided that this is an ideal time to try to bring BDS to the Coop. It goes without saying that if the Coop stops carrying the 10 Israeli products we currently carry, events in the Middle East will not be affected in the least. What such a vote will do, and the aggressive campaign to push this vote upon the Coop (a vote that failed by a very wide margin in the past), has already done, is to make many of our Jewish members feel unsafe and unwelcome.

We are a community of many religions and races. When a group of us is facing global hatred and violence, it is incumbent upon us to support that group. How anyone could look at what Jewish people are facing worldwide, and conclude that the best response for our community is to make our Jewish members feel vulnerable, unsafe and unwelcome is shocking and in conflict with our mission.

Please keep abreast of the votes coming up at our general meetings. If a vote on BDS is forced upon our beloved Coop, please show up at that meeting and cast a vote for kindness, compassion, empathy and unity.

*Thank you.*

*Sondra Shaievitz*

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## COMMITTED TO THE COOP AND TO EACH OTHER

To the Editor and Fellow Coop Members:

As the campaign to boycott Israeli products at our beloved Coop proceeds, it is essential that we all commit to acting with integrity and respect for the Coop, our Mission Statement, our fellow Coop members and the dignity and worth of all peoples. We must take our mission statement seriously and avoid products that depend on the ex-

exploitation of others. Though we may disagree about boycotting Israeli products, and though emotions will sometimes run high, a commitment to those core values and to our wonderful Coop will see us through. Ultimately, we—and the Coop itself—will emerge the stronger. I have faith in you, my fellow members!

*Carol Wald*

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## A GROUNDED RESPONSE

Dear PSFC:

I am a new PSFC member, but first joined a food coop in 1983. I am also Jewish and a third-generation Holocaust survivor. I have family in Israel, from infants to pensioners. Finally, I am a lawyer and have long been politically engaged.

In sum, I have deep grounding to respond to two themes in some members' objections to a PSFC boycott of Israeli goods.

1. A boycott would be divisive; the Coop shouldn't take sides; the Coop shouldn't get involved in international affairs.

This ship has sailed. The Coop is not neutral. With every order placed for Israeli goods (Sabra hummus, SodaStream products, produce), the Coop is actively being divisive and taking a side. Every day, the Coop is choosing to purchase and sell goods from a nation which the World Court held is plausibly committing genocide with forced displacement, detention, looting, death, maiming, starvation, thirst and disease.

2. The Coop should be "safeguarded" from a boycott of Israeli goods.

To the contrary, the Coop is taking unreasonable risks by choosing to sell Israeli prod-

ucts. Daily, the Coop mocks its own mission, specifically its commitment “to avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others.” All products originating from Israel depend on that nation’s exploitation of Palestinians. By carrying these goods, the Coop offends its values and risks losing members, including me, who expect the Coop to honor its mission.

I’m informed that over 1,100 members have already signed a petition asking the Coop to boycott Israel goods. It is unreasonable for the Coop to risk losing these and other members.

To safeguard its integrity and longevity, the Coop should voluntarily cease selling Israeli products and actively facilitate a member vote on an Israeli goods’ boycott.

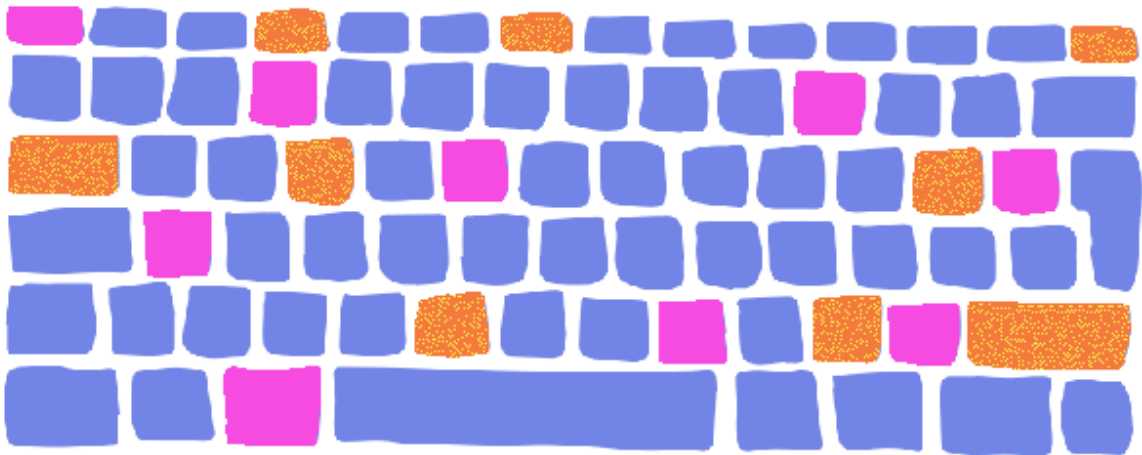
*In struggle,*  
*M.J. Williams*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



**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.**

LINWAITERS' 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*

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## 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*

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## 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*

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## 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.

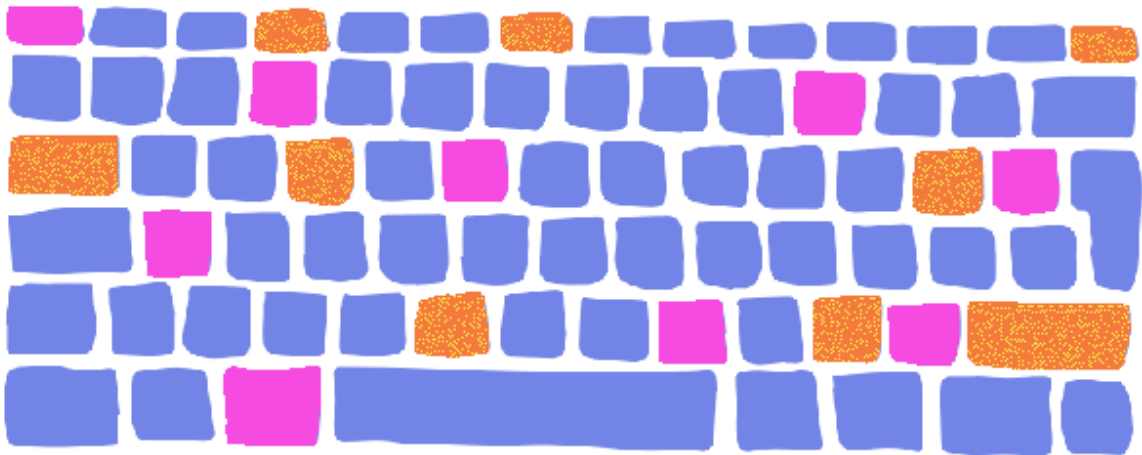
*Rebecca Stronger*

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LETTERS

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## CURRENT POLITICS

Dear Coop,

The current politics in this nation have reached a critical mess. The right and left battle it out in a tone-deaf contest of wills. The conflict frequently takes on a somber

tone. It sometimes seems more like a war. Troubles in the Middle East have a similar ring. Bringing either conflict into active debate will do nothing for the Coop but sew consternation and conflict. We've got a great crew; the ship is steady.

As a successful progressive institution, we have kept ourselves above the fray. Taking the high road is always difficult. Allowing the Coop to remain free from choosing a side will permit peace to prevail.

There is a better path for America, and Israel and the Palestinians. Keeping the little store on Union Street free of such political matters is best. If we put our love and energy into the store, it will come back to nourishing us. As does the crew; keep us on course—in spite of storms.

With Hope,  
*Rodger Parsons*

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## BDS WRONG FOR THE COOP

To the Editors,

I am a retired area coordinator and current member of PSFC. I'm a fourth generation American and I don't belong to any religious congregation. I've never been to Israel. My ancestors came to America to escape antisemitic persecution.

I simply cannot take part in an organization that singles out the world's one and only Jewish state for special condemnation. There is plenty of uncooperative extremism all over the world including Palestinian suicide bombers. It is repugnant to me to think that the prestige of the Coop is being used to glorify one side versus the other in the Middle East.

The continued publicity that BDS would receive, if we hold a referendum, is an embarrassment to me, your retired employee. Further, if the referendum were to pass, I would have to resign my membership. I wonder how many other employees and members would be driven away too. Antisemitism is wrong even in the name of free speech and democracy.

*Bonnie Q. Kaplan*

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BDS

Dear Editors,

BDS, and their statement on October 7th, makes it a movement unfit for a community that embraces the background of all of its members.

Supporting a movement that attempts to justify violence on a day when people were massacred because of their religion is not aligned with the Coop's mission statement to "make the Coop welcoming and accessible to all."

That being said, it is not appropriate for the *Gazette* to be publishing letters supporting the BDS movement or for it to be considered for adoption by the Coop.

*Jackie Loeshelle*

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SUPPORT OUR COOPERATIVE SPIRIT

Dear Editors,

From 2010 through 2015, the Coop was engaged in a controversy that could have destroyed the Coop. A small group of members set out to have the Coop endorse a political position that had no connection to the Coop's core mission. The effort ultimately failed. The costs to the Coop were high: countless member and coordinator hours; thousands of dollars for meeting space rental; loss of precious GM time; and irreparable damage to the Coop's reputation.

Prior to the murders, beheadings, rapes, and kidnappings committed by the genocidal terrorist organization Hamas on October 7, the matter appeared to have been put to rest. But following the October 7 massacre, some members reintroduced this controversy. It is ill advised, toxic, and pernicious. We cannot allow the social fabric of the Coop to be torn asunder again. Our highest priority must be the well-being and preservation of our Park Slope Food Coop.

But shouldn't Coop members be allowed to use our resources to promote causes dear to them? Yes, within the limits, as noted in *Gazette* submission guidelines. BDS violates those guidelines. BDS is part of the anti-Israel movement that seeks to deny the Jewish people the right of self-determination in a portion of their historic homeland. Hamas and multiple additional terrorist organizations endorsed BDS as the "Council of National and Islamic Forces in Palestine." The anti-Israel protests have been violent, engaging in harassment and vandalism. They make false accusations against Israel and call it "legitimate criticism." The anti-Israel movement is discriminatory, violent, and hateful.

The Editors must abide by *Gazette* guidelines and cease publishing letters on this topic. There is no shortage of sources of information and misinformation for anyone interested.

*Barbara Mazor*

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## BDS

Dear fellow Coop Members:

I am very concerned with the impact that the BDS movement is having on the Coop community, particularly given the brutality of the Oct. 7 terrorist attack on civilians and the massive spike in anti-Semitic and Islamophobic attacks around the world since the Oct. 7 attacks.

I will also share an observation. I used to see a significant number of clearly religious Jews shopping as members of the Coop. I have not seen them since the BDS movement became active in our community. I feel like this has driven away members, and its resurgence after the Oct. 7 terrorist attack is making remaining Jewish members, myself included, *highly* uncomfortable, possibly even unsafe.

I am sympathetic to both Israel and Palestine. I believe in a sound, two-state solution. But the Coop is a community where people have differing views and for the Coop to boycott one side will split our community and feed into a growing insecurity of Jews in our community. I think this is harmful to the Coop. It is more important for the Coop to fight anti-Semitism and, I will add, Islamophobia, in our own community than to target a foreign nation.

I think an isolated boycott aimed at Israel is the wrong way to handle this. If the Coop is going to boycott entire nations (I am not convinced we should), we need to establish clear criteria of what would trigger such a boycott and apply that unbiased set of criteria to every nation we import from. To target one nation and ignore every other nation is biased and problematic. Make it a simple rubric that is used without bias and apply it to all nations or do not boycott any nations.

Thank you,

*David Michaelson*

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BDS

Dear Editor,

As members since 2010, my husband and I are heavily invested with untold hours of work, in the PSFC.

We are appalled that the *Linewaiters' Gazette*, the official organ of the PSFC, has been publishing letters of support for BDS. It is no secret that wherever BDS takes hold, violence ensues. This is a fact and it is part of the BDS mandate.

Are we now to stop our membership at the because it will become a dangerous, or at best, uncomfortable place for us?

There are many venues where people who want to engage in political debate can go. The PSFC should not become one of them, and must certainly not give platform to one side of the Israel-Palestine conflict, where passions run high and, to many of us, are deeply personal.

Please stop publishing letters that create a climate of hostility in the PSFC for so many of its members who come in good faith, to work and to shop in peace.

*Baila Olidort*

*Lubavitch International*

*Editor-in-Chief*

*[www.lubavitch.com](http://www.lubavitch.com)*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024



DISCONTINUED PRODUCTS

To the Editor:

I am sometimes disappointed to find that a favored food has disappeared from our Coop shelves without explanation, never to reappear. Some time ago, for example, we lost Sesmark Sesame Thins crackers and, more recently, frozen orange juice concentrate of any kind. I think it would be helpful for our buyers to post a brief explanation, perhaps on the website, for each distinctive product discontinued; for example, poor sales, producer violation of labor standards, etc.

In cooperation,

*Curtis Skinner*

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## EXTENDED SHOPPING HOURS, PLEASE

Dear *Linewaiters' Gazette*,

Can we get a Coordinators' Corner update from the General Coordinators about extending shopping hours? It looks like there are lots of people waiting to join and existing members clamoring for open work slots. What's the plan?

Thank you,

*Lisa Guido*

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## PLURALISM IS A DEMOCRATIC VALUE

Dear Fellow Members:

During the Open Forum at the October General Meeting, a member suggested reconsidering the Coop's joining the Boycott, Divestments and Sanction movement. This

suggestion was met with applause. When the Open Forum was closed to allow time for the business of the meeting to be addressed (note: the meeting still required a resolution to extend 15 minutes to accommodate all agenda items on the slate), several attendees called out “Shame!” and “Undemocratic!”

As should be evident to anyone paying attention, a large number of our fellow members object strenuously to the Coop selling Israeli products. As should also be evident, both by expression of views and by sales volume, a large number of members support the sale of Israeli products.

If we truly aspire to democratic ideals, why is it so hard to allow members to make their own choices? BDS supporters should be welcome to exercise whatever commercial behavior comports with their moral cosmology, and fellow members who have different viewpoints should be able to do the same. Imposing one moral position on an issue that clearly holds a myriad of deeply considered perspectives strikes me as monolithic self-righteousness masquerading as “democratic.” Pluralism, no matter how offensive, is a democratic value. Tyranny, no matter how well-intentioned, is not.

*Brian Shuman*

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## BDS REDUX

Dear Members:

In years past, Coop members debated the advisability of joining the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, a nonviolent campaign to secure justice for Palestine. Launched in 2005 at the behest of Palestinian civil society organizations, BDS has proven a powerful tool in the effort to end Israeli apartheid. The Coop as a whole never signed on to BDS, but individual members have long chosen to boycott items produced in Israel or made by companies supportive of the Israeli state (e.g., SodaS-

tream).

As shown by the terrible events of Oct. 7 and later, the BDS campaign is more relevant than ever. As I write, more than 10,000 Palestinians in Gaza have been killed by Israel's barbaric bombing campaign, combined with a blockade that deprives the civilian population of food, water and medical care. According to CNN, "Children are nearly half of all casualties." In my view, it's an ethical imperative to mourn all the victims, Jewish and Palestinian, while absolutely rejecting Israel's genocidal rampage. (Yes, what we are seeing meets "A Textbook Definition of Genocide" according to Holocaust scholar Raz Segal in an article published by *Jewish Currents* on Oct. 13.)

In keeping with our stated commitment to "avoid products that depend on the exploitation of others," I fervently hope that the Coop will now take steps to join the BDS movement. We stood up to help end South African apartheid. Palestine deserves no less.

*Jan Clausen*

Please note: the article by Raz Segal referred to in the letter can be accessed at *Jewish Currents*. Statistics from CNN are available at: "Civilian death toll: Israeli and Palestinian fatalities continue to rise amid the war with Hamas" | CNN

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UNITY AT THE COOP

Dear Members:

Let's keep each other safe in light of recent events in the Middle East.

If we are to accept photographs and personal accounts of Palestinians on the ground, then we are also to accept photographs and personal accounts of Israelis on the

ground. The massacre visited upon Israel on Oct. 7th is real. The destructive follow-up of the Israeli invasion is real. The follow up murder to that of a rabbi in Detroit is real. The continuous global threats against Jews and Muslims are real. Present horrors will be replaced by fresh horrors.

Ongoing battles around who did what first are only fights about where it all started thousands of years ago. The only winners are the normalizers of hatred for Jews and Muslims. The latest headlines can't capture reality any more than they can about immigration. Therefore this is not a fight that the Coop should step into lest we are seen as supporting violence.

We need different dialogue here to discuss this. In our internet-influenced world of trolling, let's do better. Inside this organization, I invite us all to be Pro Coop. Let's take time to listen to each other, cooperate, even when we disagree. Listening is doing something productive. Blaming isn't. Unity for our membership remains the arc of our Coop's intent.

Concern for group B is not reduced by showing concern for group A. It's not pie.

*Jesse Rosenfeld*

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## COMMITTEE REPORT CONFUSION?

Dear Editor,

*The Linewaiters' Gazette*, like all elements of the "Fourth Estate," provides an important function in Coop governance by shedding light on and informing members about critical and overlooked issues at the Coop. This is why I've been dismayed to find in my brief experience trying to submit a committee report to the *Gazette* that it operates in complete darkness. There is no masthead. To contact the *Gazette*, there is on-

ly a single email address and it is anonymous. Questions sent to this email address go unanswered. There is no transparency and seemingly no accountability. It is completely unacceptable for our newspaper to operate as it does behind a veil of secrecy.

Sincerely,  
*Avi Fisher*

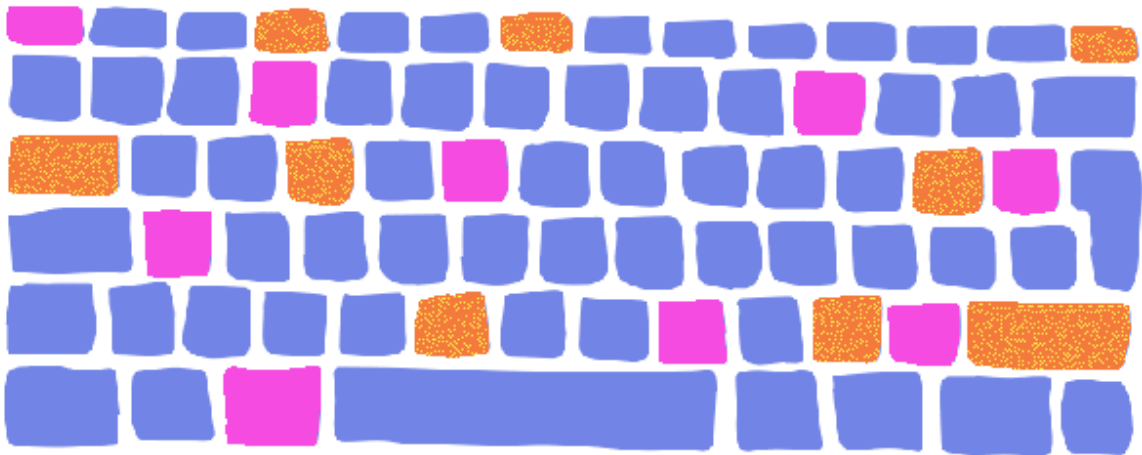
*Coordinator's Note: Committee Reports, like all submissions for Gazette publication or consideration for publication, are sent to a single email address. Content is then distributed to one of four editorial teams. Content that meets standards, which in the case of committee reports includes a limit of 750 words, will advance to publication. When reports require changes, editors generally send feedback to authors if their time permits. It is, however, incumbent upon the writer to adhere to guidelines. Regarding a Gazette masthead: its revival is in the works.*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



RE: GENERAL MEETINGS

Members and leadership,

Some greet in-person General Meetings as a “return to normal.” They also carry disappointment. Months ago, leadership was asked to implement a hybrid solution [of virtu-

al and in-person attendance]. Sadly, there's no indication that this possibility was considered nor is it clear that the membership actually voted for one or the other option (though I may have missed it).

In person has advantages and advocacy. So does the greater inclusion facilitated by hybrid. What is the greater good for our community? With thousands of members, we need greater participation at meetings to consider important, financially impactful or long-range matters.

In recent months, generally fewer than 150 members dialed in, sometimes less than 90. Yet I attended more meetings than in the decade preceding the pandemic because of online access. Will in-person meetings burgeon? It is fair to speculate that a fair number of members attended only to garner two work credits.

After 13 years being engaged yet never living close by, my status is now "retired." Shopping, periodically working a shift (not required but enjoyed) and attending monthly evening meetings is impractical for me. This decision lacks flexibility. Even post-2019, circumstances were unchanged. Isn't there wisdom in better access electronically? Why not avail ourselves of all opportunities? If in-person carries more value, then let the new one-credit policy apply to in-person attendance, but don't deny participation to the rest.

Respectfully,  
*Amita Rodman*

*Editors' note: Amita Rodman is incorrect in characterizing hybrid meetings as something the General Coordinators can just implement. The GCs explained several times that virtual meetings were an emergency measure during COVID and that the GCs have been unwinding emergency measures. They also stated that members can submit an agenda item to discuss a hybrid meeting format. In addition, the Chair Committee stated that they were not yet prepared to run a hybrid meeting, and that they would need more people, more equipment and more time to work on how the GM*

*would function effectively.*

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## LET'S VOTE ON MASKED DAYS—WITH A REMOTE OPTION

To the Editor,

I love the Coop and have been a member for many years, but the lifting of the mask mandate has made the Coop a less accessible space for people who, like me, are disabled, immunocompromised, live in a household with others who are disabled or immunocompromised or for any other reason want or need to limit their potential for COVID exposure. The proposal discussed at the September General Meeting—mandating masking two days a week—would help make the Coop a safer space for everyone and would be easy to implement, just like the carrot tags that limit capacity only on certain days. Those who strongly don't want to mask could shop five days a week, while the other two days could be COVID-safer spaces for anyone who needs to mask or is fine with donning a mask to support their fellow Coop members. This would also allow COVID-cautious members to choose work shifts that require masking and help reduce the cumulative risks of the Coop staff who keep the Coop running day in and day out.

Please put this item up for a vote at an upcoming GM—and please create an option for remote participation for that meeting (and in general). Without a remote option and with no mask mandate at the newly in-person GMs, many of the people for whom masked days would be most important will be kept out of the conversation and effectively disfranchised. We are part of the Coop community too. Please vote to make the Coop a safer space for us and let us have a voice in the process.

*Adrien Lorenzo Weibgen*

*Note from General Coordinator Ann Herpel: As I suggested at September's GM,*

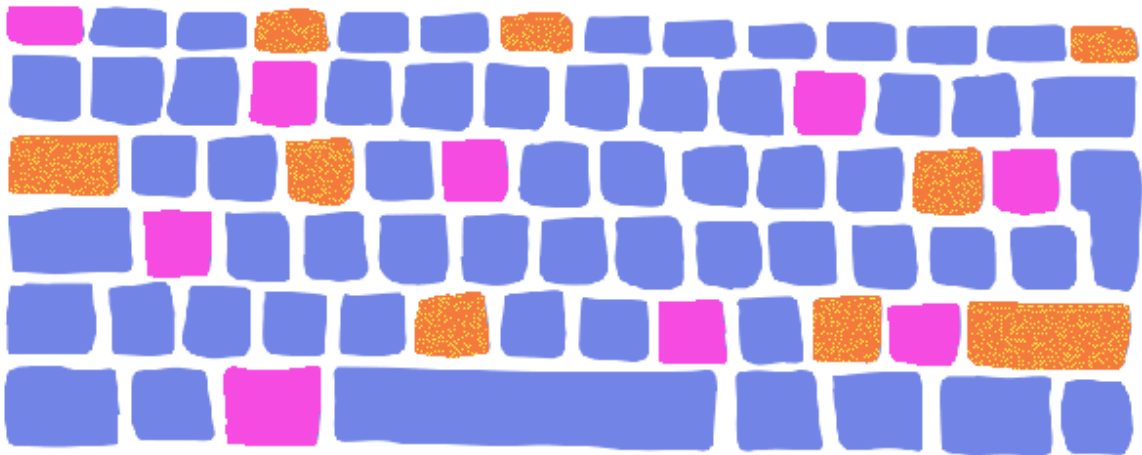
*there is an option for all members to vote on a proposal for masking: a Coop-wide referendum. Holding a referendum is the solution, as every member would receive a ballot and could vote on this important issue, especially those who cannot attend an in-person meeting due to health reasons. If a member wants to have a referendum on this subject, they are welcome to place an item on the agenda of a future GM.*

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## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



A SECOND COOP LOCATION: YES!

Dear Coop,

The question of whether or not PSFC should open a new store in another neighborhood is too important to be decided by the tiny minority of members willing and able

to attend general meetings. Every member should have a vote, and I vote “YES!” because the reasons why so few members attend the GM are far too numerous to list. One important constraint for me is PSFC’s location. I envy members who own a car or live close enough to walk to PSFC or reach it by some convenient public transportation! My only choices have always been: expensive cab or Uber, or a hike to a subway followed by a change to a shuttle train followed by a long wait for a bus (which is no longer in service). So even though I adore shopping at PSFC and am exempt from the work requirement, I am seldom able to shop there. Online shopping would be wonderful but cannot compare to the joy and sensuality of choosing your own fresh food. And yes, perhaps some new store might not be any closer to my Brooklyn address. Nonetheless, just the possibility it might is exhilarating. And should it not benefit me, it will help others like me—living in a food desert, desperate for the privilege (dare I say the right?) to easier access to healthy affordable food!

*Phelonise Willie*

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## THIRD-PARTY DELIVERY SERVICES AT THE COOP?

To the Editor:

I am writing to raise serious issues with the Coop’s proposal to allow online ordering and delivery. The proposal, discussed as something of a done deal in Travis Hartman’s recent piece in the *Linewaiters’ Gazette* (“Online Shopping and Delivery: Plans Are Underway”), is flawed in one way that is not even touched on in the piece.

While it is clearly not good for the vitality and cohesiveness of our Coop that people would “shop” yet no longer interact with fellow members, the central problem with online delivery is captured as a mere aside in Hartman’s piece: “After the member picking the order has completed and packed the shop, they can just hit the delivery button in the app and a delivery service will come to the Coop, hopefully within the next

five or ten minutes, and pick up the groceries for delivery.”

A delivery service?

Therein lies the flaw: Third-party delivery services are inherently exploitive of their workforce, which consists entirely of independent contractors who do not receive minimum wage, have no health benefits, are forced to obtain and maintain mopeds or electric bikes at their own cost, and can't set their hours. In effect, delivery workers are treated like disposable gig workers.

Many delivery workers have been killed rushing between jobs because the nature of the third-party apps is that these workers get paid by the delivery—often deliveries that are far-flung. Making those deliveries at a breakneck speed is the only way for a worker to make a living—a fact that leads to death and injuries at a rate that would shock Coop members.

Streetsblog has written extensively about this, and I urge Coop members to read up on this industry before inking any deal that would bind us to it.

Third-party delivery services are not in keeping with the Coop's values of equity and fair pay. I urge you to reject this notion.

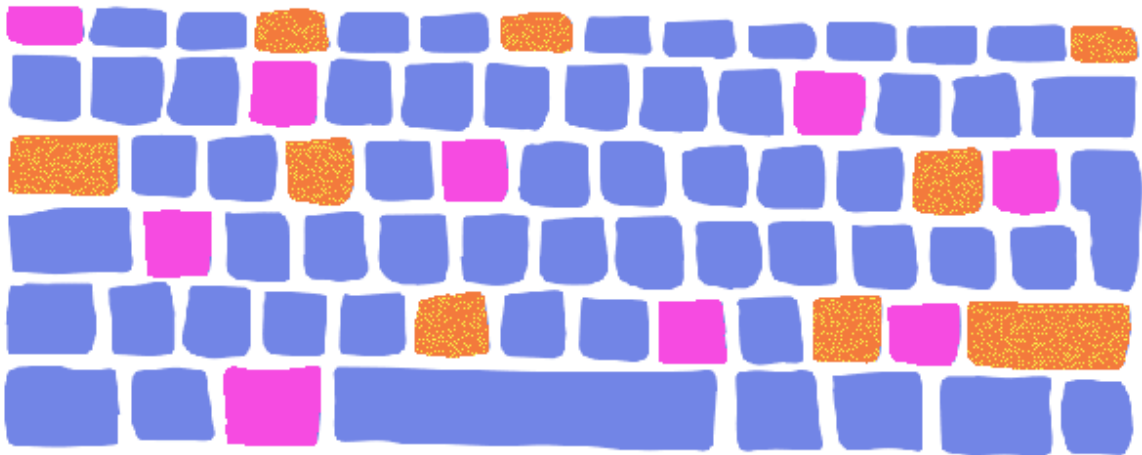
*Gersh Kuntzman*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



LET THE PEOPLE VOTE ON A SECOND STORE!

To the Editor,

I've been excited about the idea of the Coop opening a second store, but I wasn't able to make the May General Meeting. So is that really that?? Please put it on the

agenda again, and for those who get the chance to vote on it at a future GM—please let it move forward so that all of us can have a say!

This idea is about charting a way forward for the Coop—creating a new location would allow us to significantly expand the Coop’s membership, giving many more people (in a new neighborhood!) access to the amazing, affordable food selection all of us love. Cooperatives around the world operate according to a set of seven core values, and launching a second store would advance at least two of them: concern for community, and voluntary and OPEN membership. Our current store isn’t big enough to let everyone in who wants to be in, and the Coop has had to cap membership for years. The Coop is an extremely cool model of cooperation that most people have never seen before, that could enrich a lot of other people’s lives. Let’s share that!

Even if you have reservations about this idea, what the Second Location Study Committee is proposing is to create a NEW committee, which would continue to develop the idea and move it forward only if feasible. In other words, every good question that you have will be considered by that new, very smart group of people, and if that group can’t figure out how to make it work, it won’t happen. So why waste all of the work that’s been done so far by voting the idea down now?

Please don’t let fear rule the day. Give this proposal another chance & let the second store move forward!

Iele Paloumpis

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## DITCH THE FLIMSY CHEESE WRAP

To the Editor,

I was impressed by how little waste we generate. But we could do much better. I can’t

fathom why the cheeses still need to be wrapped in plastic. A few years ago, at least the plastic wrap was substantial and could be reused as long as the cheese was in the house. But this thin, perhaps less toxic wrap is bad all around. I'm sure no one likes to unwrap the cheese from under those sticky, sticky labels that hold the loose ends. My husband simply tears it open, leaving the cheese unwrapped to dry out and spoil. I undertake the painstakingly difficult task of pulling the ends of the plastic from under the label so I can rewrap the cheese and keep it for 10 days or so. The plastic we use now rips so easily there is little left to maintain the freshness of the cheese. A bad situation all around.

The new Zero Waste store in my neighborhood uses a paper called Formaticum, a paper that will biodegrade but is specifically designed to keep the cheese fresh. I belong to the Coop for several reasons, but minimizing my environmental impact is very, very important to me, and I'm guessing, to most members. Please make the transition. I'm willing to pay more for the environment. And thank you.

Ann Schneider

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## LET THE FULL MEMBERSHIP VOTE ON A SECOND STORE

To the Editor,

I'm disappointed that the idea of the Coop opening a second store was shot down at a recent GM by a margin of just 10 votes. I hope the Coop will give the idea a second hearing and allow all members to weigh in.

The Second Location Study Committee (which I'm not a part of) has been working to determine the feasibility of this idea for the last six years. The group includes people with expertise in urban planning, business, community development, and the creation of grocery stores that improve food access for underserved neighborhoods. They've

determined that the idea could work—the Coop has more money than ever before, we have a tried-and-true, scalable model, we could launch a second store without financial risk to the current one, and it would allow us to let in thousands of new members the current store can't accommodate.

The Committee wants to put the proposal to a vote of the full membership, and give members a month to cast their ballots—enough time for everyone to review the proposal, ask questions, and vote on their own schedule. But they can't do that unless it makes it through a GM—an hours-long experience that many members don't have time for, or don't fully understand the importance of. People at the GM asked some good questions about the proposal, but rather than allowing the conversation to continue, they voted to end it in a meeting that less than 1% of members attended.

This proposal gets at the heart of the Coop's mission: providing affordable, fresh food, in community. A second store would allow us to give that to thousands more. Please put this on the GM agenda again, vote yes to let the conversation continue, and then let all of the members decide.

Adrien Lorenzo Weibgen

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## DEMOCRACY DIES IN DARKNESS—BUT THE SECOND LOCATION SHOULD NOT

To the Editor,

Should 15,000 more people have access to the good food, low prices, and cooperation that we enjoy at the Coop? Should the Coop double its tremendous impact for the community and regional farmers? This is some of the promise of a second location of the Coop, which the May General Meeting (GM) struck down by only 14 votes to move to a Coop-wide referendum.

The GM had 138 votes, less than 1% of active members. It was a marked contrast in verdict and sample size to the 2018 survey in which 86% of members strongly or somewhat supported a second Coop location. That survey saw 2,442 members respond—17 times the GM vote.

Expansion is not only a question about the future but also a crucial part of Coop history. We grew by nearly 10,000 members from 2001 to 2022, and those members could not have joined but for real estate purchases and transformations like accepting debit cards. The second location would continue that lineage of generosity that the majority of members have benefited from.

There are many important questions about a second location: Where should it be? How should it be funded? The Second Location Study Committee (SLSC) has grappled with these questions for nearly a decade. Their Draft Report and Recommendations and infographic give me confidence that we can answer those questions collectively.

We should engage with the Draft Report and make our voices heard, and we can look to Coop history for hope. Michael Freedman-Schnapp of the SLSC noted that the early 2000s expansion “was actually voted down the first time in a referendum [several years earlier]. So we were incredibly lucky that the opportunity to purchase that building came up again.” May we earn that second chance and take it so fruitfully.

In cooperation,

Phil Wong

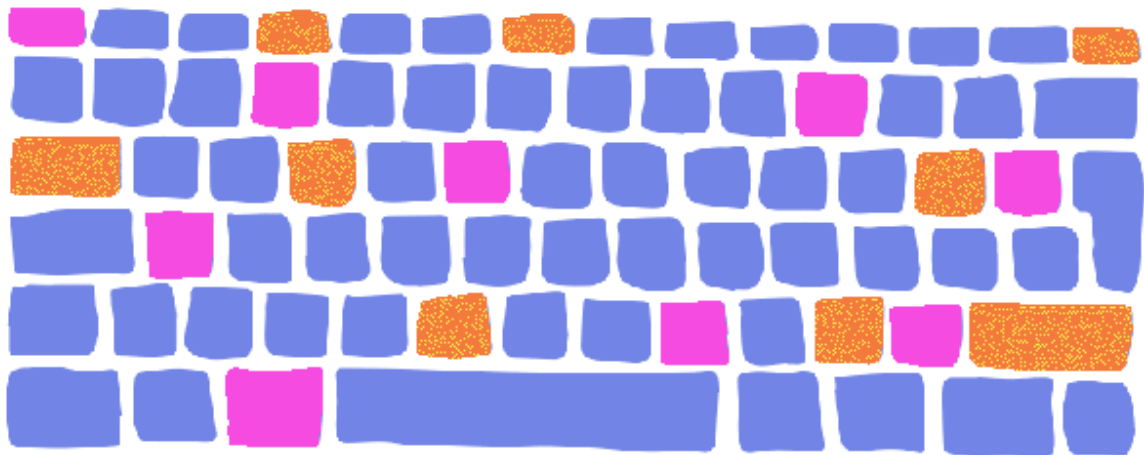
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



BRING BACK THE CLASSIFIEDS

To the Editor:

At the risk of redundancy, I am writing yet again to suggest—and request—that the *Linewaiters' Gazette* resume its “Classified” section. I don’t know why it was eliminated, I believe early during TrumpVirus, but surely it should be reinstated.

Among its many advantages and conveniences, it serves as an important means of communication among Coop members. And, for an organization that touts the benefits of recycling and improving the environment, it is indispensable for minimizing the unnecessary purchase of yet more goods.

I have both bought and sold items via the *Gazette* and always been happy with my recycled bargains.

I am again requesting that the *Gazette* reinstate this valuable service to the members.

*Marc Palmer*

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## MASKING WHILE SHOPPING

To the Editor:

I am still masking, as when I get even a cold it lasts for months. I have been cold-free for most of the past three years, and will continue with the inconvenience of masking vs. the worse inconvenience of a long respiratory illness. That being said, studies show that by masking I’m protecting others, not myself. Everyone in the room needs to be masking to reduce the risk of spreading a cold, the flu, or Covid. So how can I shop safely at the PSFC if no one else around me is masking? I would appreciate it if there were at least one or two days per week when everyone in the room is masked. - Can’t we set this up in non-peak hours for the safety of those of us who are immunocompromised?

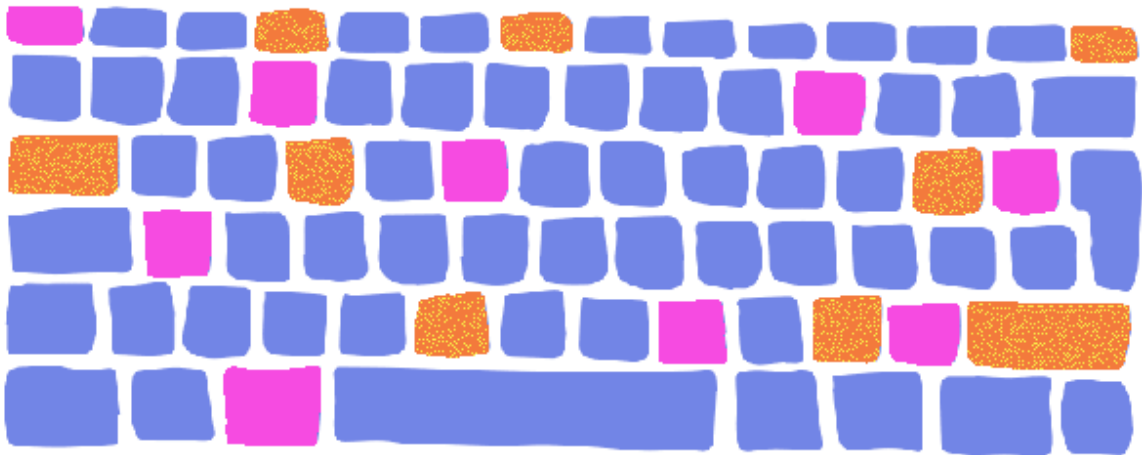
*Spike Kahn*

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



IS THERE AN OFF-RAMP FOR THE PSFC MASK MANDATE?

To the Editor:

I am writing in response to the article "Mask Mandate, Demographic Survey, Child-care Dominate Discussion at October General Meeting," published in the 12/27/2022

issue of the *Linewaiters' Gazette*. Given that the General Coordinators have decided to retain the mask mandate for shoppers and workers, despite the recent majority vote from the membership to make mask-wearing optional, is there any procedural off-ramp for the mask mandate that respects the democratic decisions of the membership? If so, will the General Coordinators please publish and circulate to the membership what this process is? It doesn't seem very cooperative that a small minority (the General Coordinators) have decided to maintain the mask mandate when a large number of Coop members (51 percent of the approximately 4,600 people who voted on the mask policy) voted to make mask-wearing optional.

In solidarity,  
*Amie Macdonald*

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## MISINFORMATION ABOUT VACCINES

Dear Editor,

Words can't adequately express my dismay at seeing a (Jan. 17) letter presenting anti-vaccine misinformation. The author is not incorrect that public health is vastly improved when people have access to clean water, decent housing, good food, and proper toilet facilities. But to claim that statements about the safety and effectiveness of vaccines are scientific "propaganda" is dangerous nonsense. The chief reason people are able to persuade themselves of these absurdities is that the very effectiveness of vaccines makes the harms they prevent nearly invisible.

I encourage interested persons to read about the horrors of smallpox, for example. Or the experience of post-polio syndrome. Or consider the flu: Many people apply the label "flu" to bad colds and stomach upset. The actual flu, influenza, is something else entirely, as anyone who has had it can tell you: The debilitation is extreme and long-lasting.

The long and the short of it is that you can't be an anti-vaxxer if you know anything about the history of disease or if you know more about the biological underpinnings than will allow you to do more than make vague noises about unspecified "information coming out." People die because of rubbish like this.

*Jolanta Benal*

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## SECOND LOCATION (WITH THANKS TO THE SECOND LOCATION STUDY COMMITTEE)

To the Editor:

This multi-year process [to explore adding a second Coop location] deserves continued study, but not as presented. Much has shifted since 2018. Some concerns:

1. Strategic planning. We need it. Second location is an element of it. Bolstering the assertion:
  - a. Exhibit #1: We lack governance integration: a "Committee Oversight Committee," a new committee (which I favor) as oversight to other committees?
  - b. Top structure needs attention—to integrate, clarify decisions, plus put planning into operations. General Coordinators are empowered to run our shop (good!). How they report to a higher authority and integrate, feeding into a master plan, is unclear.
  - c. General Meetings average 225+/- [members] voting on behalf of 14,000. There's better response from surveys. Up our digitized game to tweak members' decisions?
  - d. Members have adopted multiple ways to provision pantries since 2020.

This is not second location “stuff.” But it’s all part of a master plan in a changed landscape. Who’s empowered? Are we ready? We need a parallel effort, or we do this with weakness. As evidenced: Our GM will retire, what’s the plan? The Board gave suggestions (its fiduciary role) to a key committee that stonewalled (saga of Personnel Committee & GM).

## 2. Threats/Opportunities?

a. Do other models serve more geographically? Have we considered: warehouse? services offsite? redeployment of upper floor? experiments in mobile options? Have we actively tested interest of neighborhoods or multiple neighborhoods (food truck mobile market). Is in-person shopping the only model?

b. The future is not assured. Grants pulled us through! “More members, more shoppers” to increase figures is not easy—more flow at 782 Union is not a given. Expansion has large operational and financial implications.

d. Re-examine the marketplace and need, update the survey results (who they represent, and overall findings).

Thank you,  
*Amita Rodman*

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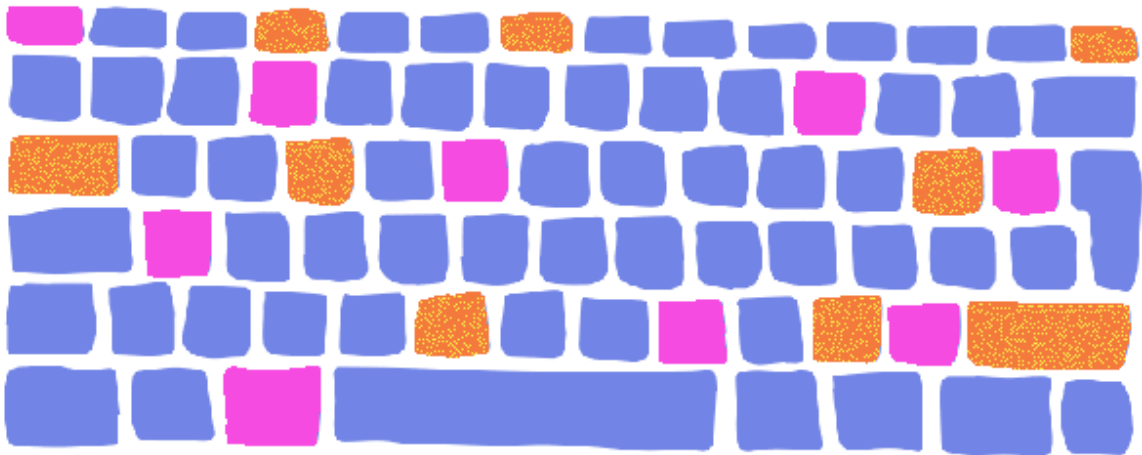
See our letter submission policy [here](#).

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LETTERS 1/17/2023

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## GRATEFUL FOR MASKING POLICY

To the Editor:

I joined the Coop in 2017 in my 70's, and thus am an older working member. I am writing to express my gratitude and support for the general coordinators' decision to cont-

inue the mask requirement for all shoppers and workers. As the risk of serious Covid infections and death has waned for younger members, it seems that some have forgotten that those of us who live with a continued heightened risk (whether due to age, illness or a combination of factors) need to continue to protect ourselves. As the Coop has gotten busier, it has become increasingly difficult to maintain a comfortable distance from others; it seems to me that many members are not even making a modest effort to avoid close contact. I have limited myself to working 6 a.m. stocking shifts (no customers in the store for most of the shift!) and the occasional “walker” slot when one turns up, and have tried to confine my shopping to times when the store is not too busy, but I am concerned that without a mandatory masking policy even these practices will feel inadequate. With deaths at well over 300 a day nationally, mostly among older people, those of us at a heightened risk appreciate having places where we can participate in daily life without undue worry and risk.

Thank you for the current policy and I sincerely hope it continues.

*Ellen Winner*

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## HEARTFELT THANKS TO PSFC STAFF

To the Editor:

I want to thank all of the PSFC staff for their exceptionally hard work since the pandemic began. My background is in Operations + Dispute Resolution and, while I've always been in awe of how the Coop functions under its unique business model, I am deeply grateful for everyone who kept it together through Covid so that members could continue to have such a special shopping experience. I particularly want to thank everyone involved in purchasing for toughing-out what I can only imagine to have been a supply nightmare for nearly the last three years. I've recently noticed that some of my missing staples have returned to the shelves, so I'm particularly ap-

preciative of their efforts.

The pandemic brought on chaos for everyone, and while I've read and heard about a lot of negative issues at the Coop, I want to make sure the gratitude held for staff cuts through that noise so they know they are immensely appreciated. Thank you all!

*Katheryn Keller*

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## ARE VACCINES SAFE AND EFFECTIVE?

To the editor,

The Coop had really no choice but to institute a vaccine mandate for workers, as demanded by the city, which is unfortunate because we lost people who had no intention of submitting to them. But we're now seeing information coming out about these particular vaccines that are highly disturbing, including the unprecedented plethora of deaths and disabilities that have been appearing in the CDC's Vaccine Adverse Events Reporting System (known as VAERS) temporally associated with the vaccines, plus the realization that they don't prevent infection or transmission but are only claimed to reduce hospitalization and death from Covid-19. In light of this growing realization, people should think twice about the steady stream of boosters coming out. The "safe and effective" talking points and the rock-solid belief in "the science" and in modern medicine, are looking more and more like little more than propaganda. What people actually believe in is what they are told "the science" is.

In fact, the longstanding belief in the practice of vaccination itself as the agent that wiped out the terrible infectious diseases of the past is simply *not the case*. Rather, what brought about the diminution of these diseases was the common public-health measures that most of us take for granted, and which were extended to most citizens over the course of the first half of the 20th century: specifically, indoor hot and cold

water, treated water, indoor flush toilets, refrigeration, steam heating, garbage collection, and others. Some of these were luxuries not even available to the kings of old. Think of the possibility for infectious diseases without these measures, whether with vaccinations available or not. And alternatively, how would people have fared without vaccines available, but *with* these public health measures? And, in fact, more and more people are shunning vaccines.

*David Barouh*

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## LEAVE THE HEADPHONES AT HOME

To the Editor,

I was just starting a stocking shift recently, and I found myself holding a box of farm-raised organic pork tenderloin, priced and ready to sell—quite appealing—but with no space on the refrigerated shelf for display. Being a new member and somewhat cautious by nature, I decided to ask the member next to me, who was also dutifully stocking, if he had any advice on how to proceed. “Hey, do you know where this tenderloin is supposed to go?” A little louder: “Excuse me, sorry. A question? Regarding this pork tenderloin?” Nothing! Finally, he turned around, looked at me with some skepticism, took out his earbuds and said, “What?”

What followed “what” was a fairly straightforward conversation about stocking pork tenderloin that I won’t share here, but when our problem had been resolved my fellow Coop member returned his earbuds to his ears and didn’t speak again. Now, in addition to being cautious I am also prone to shyness, especially in new situations, and yet despite myself I do think there is value in being, at minimum, open to the possibility of conversation. Headphones declare: “Do not speak to me.” Which is totally fine in any number of situations one encounters living in the most populous city in the United States, but is a shift at the Coop one of those times? Discussing pork tenderloin or

produce or U-boat technique can lead to conversations about work, hobbies, family—anything. Or not. But whether you'd rather talk or listen, isn't it a good thing to get to know your fellow members a little bit more? Sharing our time and our labor, together in this place, is what makes it more than just a grocery store. Right?

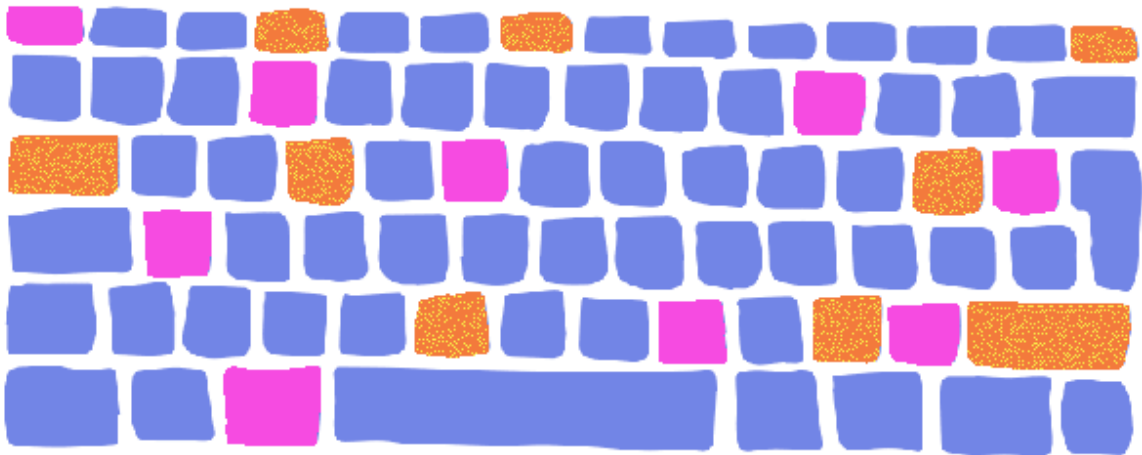
*Clark Mizono*

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LETTERS 12/27/2022

June 11, 2024

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



## THE NEW NEW-MEMBER ORIENTATION: SOMETHING LOST, SOMETHING GAINED

To the Editor:

During my time as a Coop member, I have been called upon a number of times while working a shift to give tours to visitors—back when we used to have visitors. I always

enjoyed meeting people who were interested in how the shopping floor is organized and how the place works. It was a pleasure to introduce folks to the culture, community, and bounty of the Coop.

While we wait for the return of more personal orientations, I hope we can consider sending newly oriented members downstairs to the shopping floor for a personalized tour by a member working a shift.

The tours would be welcoming and a great introduction to a place where someone will hold your baby by the ice-cream freezer if you have to use the bathroom. A little break from walking carts or stocking vitamins would be a nice perk for a working member. We could restore a little of what we've lost.

Respectfully,

*Lynn Yellen, Coop enthusiast*

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## JOE HOLTZ'S SUSPENSION

To the Editor:

Thank you to all whose letters expressed what is in so many Coop members' hearts over the suspension (and without pay?!!!) of Joe Holtz. I sincerely hope this mistake is rectified and an overdue apology made to the man who has held the Park Slope Food Coop together for decades and helped insure the safety of us all during the COVID years. There was no safer place to be than the Coop. We owe him. If something isn't done soon, let's all like-minded Coopsters get together and make sure our voices are heard in support of this superior leader that we might give him his due.

Peace & love,

*Heidi Oleszczuk*

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## JOE HOLTZ'S SUSPENSION LACKED DUE PROCESS OR PROPORTION

Dear Editor,

I want to echo others' disappointment at the treatment of Joe Holtz, a Coop co-founder, which appears to have lacked proportion and reasonableness from my (admittedly limited) vantage point and seems like a smokescreen for larger behind-the-scenes issues. I love how the Coop protects its own through protocols in the age of COVID; but it's one thing to censure someone for breaching fast-changing COVID protocols and another to cut off email (remote work risks no exposure) or dock 1/12th of annual pay. The optics are of a masked vaccinated employee with unclear symptoms who followed good faith protocols and avoided putting others at real risk, and was penalized in part for candor (when my work colleague did something similar, she received more compassionate treatment, with concern for her speedy recovery and no punitive consequences for good faith yet flawed behavior under still-extraordinary circumstances).

This smacks of a marital dispute where one party says something innocuous and the other party loses their cool; in those cases it's about more than the situation at hand—the original transgression is bigger than it seemed from the outside, but a disproportionate or punitive reaction isn't helpful either. To persons who accuse Joe of receiving special treatment: I agree, he seems to have been singled out for disproportionately poor treatment in this case and hopefully he'll have his pay reinstated at minimum. This doesn't seem to be about the "crime" of coming masked and vaccinated to work and finding out about a diagnosis, but about something else; hopefully the persons involved will find some transcendent, kind and empathetic solution going forward.

Wishing grace to all in the situation. It's been an exhausting 2+ years, let's be kind to each other as much as possible.

*Jeanne Solomon*

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## UNSAFE?

To the Gazette:

I don't want to comment on the whole Joe Holtz brouhaha, although I do have some strong feelings about it and how it is a reflection of the censorious zeitgeist that seems to have taken hold of many of our institutions. But I really have to say something about defenders of the Personnel Committee saying they felt "unsafe." For some years now I have heard the use of that word, primarily on college campuses, by young people who feel threatened by a right-wing personality being given a speaking platform, or who espouses an opinion that they strongly disagree with, or even someone who defends the free-speech rights of such a person. Maybe I am not keeping up with contemporary changes in language usage, but "upset" or "turned off" or "angry" or "annoyed" are not synonyms for "unsafe." What would make *me* feel unsafe at the Coop? If a big hole suddenly opened in the floor and I could fall through and break my neck. Or if someone came in with a weapon and threatened people with it.

Could consciousness of exposure to someone with Covid make somebody feel unsafe? Maybe for someone with underlying conditions that make it potentially quite dangerous. But if you only learn of the exposure after the incident is over, and especially if several days have passed since then without symptoms, you may have a reason to be upset, but how is "unsafe" an apt term to use? Progressives and Gen-Z'ers are often typecast by conservatives as being whiny, and maybe it is the misuse of fraught exaggerated language like that that gives cause to hang that label on them.

*Michael Esterowitz*

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## WE'RE WRITING A TV SHOW & WE WANT YOUR HELP!

Dear Coop:

The Coop is, objectively speaking, hilarious. The rotating cast of characters, the hapless members trying to learn and execute a job on the spot, the constantly evolving structure, the Drama. Have you ever worked a shift and found yourself thinking, "This could be on TV!"? Well, so have we. We have an idea and absolutely nothing else. A member-run food coop is a fantastic setting for a sitcom.

Tentatively called "COOPERATE," this (web series, probably) follows a fictionalized full-time staff working at a member-run food cooperative. From pre-shopping hours, to coordinating the chaos in the receiving room, staff parties, organics scandals, and all the other chaos this iconic cooperative sees, this single-camera sitcom highlights (and amplifies) the behind-the-scenes shenanigans that we all merely get a glimpse of when we work our shifts.

This is certainly not an entirely original idea, and other people have done things like this before (shout out "Food Coop" and "Murder at the Food Coop"! ). But we have jokes and we have fresh takes, and we would love to work with anyone else who wants to give this a try with us!

Right now, we just want to write some episodes, have a laugh, and see where the concept goes. We want to hear from you all and write with whoever is interested in getting involved. We have no funding, concrete concepts, experience writing for TV, or pretty much anything else. We're just two best friends who can't stop thinking about the Coop as a sitcom.

Reach out to us! Let us know what you think, if you want to be involved or share any funny stories you've collected in your time at the Coop. At the very least it'll be a fun time.

You can reach us at [asiyaherrero@gmail.com](mailto:asiyaherrero@gmail.com).

With love,

*Asiyah Herrero and Sydnie Rathe*