

Free Cone Day 2014: Reports from 25 leafleting locations (and 2 phone calls).

Albany, NY
Banford, CT
Berkeley, CA
Boston, MA (2 Scoop shops)
Burlington, VT (Main Scoop shop)
Burlington, VT (University of Vermont)
Chapel Hill, NC
Denver, CO
Fort Collins, CO
Greenbrae, CA
Manchester NH
Minneapolis, MN
Mount Kisco, NY
Oakland, CA
Portland, OR
San Francisco, CO (2 scoop shops)
San Jose, CA
San Diego, CA (2 locations)
South Burlington, VT
Tacoma, WA
Waterbury, VT
White Plains, NY

Albany, NY

This was our first experience with Ben & Jerry's, but we believe it went well. Four members of Upper Hudson Peace Action's Palestinian Rights Committee leafleted outside the cone shop on Lark Street in Albany from 4:00 to 5:00 PM on the 8th of April. We spoke with a number of people on their way into the shop and a number on their way out and distributed more than 150 of your flyers...to which there was only one mildly negative reaction. We held a sign with "BEN & JERRY'S" at the top and the following below:

"YES in ALBANY"

"NO in ILLEGAL ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS"

The shop manager came out and spoke with us in a very friendly way, said he understood why we were there, said we were welcome to stay, invited us to come in and talk with him any time and said we should be sure to get some ice cream.

Banford, CT

We gave out about 200 flyers. Almost everyone kept them. Please send us an article for our site on how the flyering went elsewhere.

Berkeley, CA

[JVP Person wrote]: I know that we distributed at least 1000 in the SF Bay Area at 4 locations - Berkeley, Oakland, and 2 in San Francisco!!

In Berkeley, the Ben and Jerry's shop is very near the UC campus and there were really long lines throughout the day, with most people looking like students. Many were ignorant of the situation in I/P, so it was a wonderful opportunity for education. Others appreciated our presence and the information. Similar to what [J] reported at the Oakland shop, B and J's had given permission for another group to collect donations, etc. - for a camp for kids whose parents have cancer. But there was absolutely no conflict nor problem for us. We too ran out of leaflets. Your leaflet is great, but have a minor suggestion - if you decide to re-do it or tweak it. On the back page where it says "Contact Ben and Jerry's by email via: vtjp.org/icecream", I think it should clearly state that there's an already-prepared message to send. Maybe you don't have enough space to write that, but it might encourage newbies. [Ed writes: see comment from San Jose - we hope to have a new, positive message next year!]

Finally, I had an interesting conversation on the phone with the consumer something person at Ben and Jerry's when I called. It was a woman I spoke to, but I didn't catch her name. She was saying what she's paid to say and she listened to me like she's supposed to, but I felt we did engage - maybe beyond the usual. I think she wrote down the websites I suggested she look at for more info - I pointed to JVP's policy statement on BDS and I sent her to bdsmovement.net. It sounds like they're grappling with this.

She said the company wants peace in the area and doesn't want to get involved in politics. I tried to point out that their very presence in the territories implicates them and they ARE involved. etc. etc.

Good for you for organizing this project and increasing the national involvement!!

[From E and L]: [We] were out in Berkeley yesterday and passed out leaflets at the Ben and Jerry shop on Center Street where there was a non-stop line during our shift there. We stayed from 2:30 til past 4:15 and felt good about what we did. There was not a lot of interest shown by any of the people to whom we spoke but the fact that there was a presence there in support of justice in Palestine I believe cannot have been completely ignored by the patrons of the shop. Students, especially here in Berkeley, are usually interested in matters of social justice but the issue has to be raised in as many venues and forms as possible before it can be taken on and internalized. It would help if could be done on other occasions as well. We are both 89 [y.o.] and obviously not able to be too active in this regard, but live not too far from campus and could give some small amount of time to any effort proposed.

Boston, MA (2 Scoop shops)

I did not have your lit but two postcards one a picture of how Palestine has changed in four pictures and then another with a picture of a little child wounded from Gaza and I had the boycott list of companies that we boycott I had to tell folks in the long lines that were at least two blocks long that you folks did not necessarily want a boycott just tell folks that Palestinians are not free unlike the free cones. It went really good I wish there were more Boston activist with me I was all alone

Well I stood outside two of them talking folks into letting Ben & Jerry's into pulling out of the west bank one hour at park square until the security guard chased me away and then Newbury street for the remaining four hours or maybe five long day of talking to people educating most.

Burlington, VT (Main Scoop shop)

Second year of leafleting on Church Street (the B & J owned scoop shop we believe). Seems they were expecting us, and had media, also the Company's Global Director of Social Mission

on hand. We've spoken with him before, and two of us spoke with him today. We (VTJP) had 4 members there and were joined by three from the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. The line was long and many were seen reading our leaflet as they waited. Some conversations (positive and negative reactions) and many seemed just ignorant of the issue, so maybe they learned something new. Ran out of leaflets at 5pm.

Burlington, VT (University of Vermont)

Leaflets were handed out in the morning by one of the VTJP group.

Chapel Hill, NC

Yesterday's leafleting was an experience and something to behold & be amongst. I arrived about 4:30 and there were lines going down Franklin and around to Columbia. I had about 150 leaflets. Shortly after I commenced to pass them out to the hopeful for free coneheads... [Three more of us] joined the passing. We soon were going to give out of leaflets and [P] committed \$20 to Kinkos for more and the passing out continued. Then [K] arrived and joined in the passing/chatting. [A] arrived later and he then committed more \$ for more leaflets. [We] all left by about 7:45 & after all of us had passed out 600 leaflets to an almost always willing to receive them...crowd. There were continuing lines before, throughout and when we left. There had to be well over 1K hopeful coneheads and mostly college kids. A most unique and friendly event. No media that we noticed. [W] an amazed and mostly satisfied [organizer].

Denver, CO

Thanks so much for reaching out to us for the VFJP Free Cone Day call-out! We just finished a successful action of leafletting for this evening. It definitely provided much needed exposure for our student group, and of course for the stated call out. We'll be on the lookout for news on the progression of the B&J's campaign.

[Later report]: Thanks for the opportunity to leaflet at Free Cone Day yesterday. It helped us indeed with our momentum. We didn't take pictures unfortunately, but it was successful nonetheless.

University of Denver Students for Justice in Palestine leafleted for Free Cone Day from 6-8pm MST, and gave out over a hundred leaflets about the VFJP campaign as well as DUSJP. Most people were very intrigued and took the literature, and engaged in conversation and seemed to be able to make the connection between B&J's socially responsible messaging and their exception on Palestine. Only one Zionist heckler spoke up, and was relatively easy to contain. A couple of patrons decided not to go ahead and get a free cone but rather to write a letter to management.

Fort Collins, CO

I thought the leafleting went well in Fort Collins - we handed out fifty leaflets. I thought we reached people not normally reached - some were interested in hearing about the issue. No major confrontations. One person told me I was wrong about bandj being in the west bank. I responded, "am not". Thanks for organizing this.

Greenbrae, CA

Thanks everyone who gave out fliers today outside Ben and Jerry's. Special thanks to those who changed their shifts last minute to fill in the last minute gap: It is not easy when you have planned your day to have someone ask, "Hey, can you go 30 mins earlier?"

Thanks also to [A] for printing extra fliers when it looked as though we were going to run out. By the end of the second shift we had already given out well over 200.

Judging from people's feedback, sounds as though all of us had a profitable day, and many people got educated.

Security came up to me at the beginning so I immediately produced my copy of the Pruneyard Case and handed it to him to read, which he did! Then he said he could move us, and so I quoted the other case that protects BDS activists to be outside the exact store they are targeting. I couldn't remember its name but the security guy believed me and said he would "have a word with the other security people not to hassle us!"

So glad to hear there was no trouble.

So thank you all who took part in a very successful day.

Next action in Marin is tax day.

Manchester NH

We passed out the double-sided flyers to over a hundred people between 11:30 am and 12:30 pm. The reception was generally positive with no real push-back especially after we explained what we (NH Palestine Education Network) was doing -- to inform and educate people about the B & J's Israeli franchise selling B & J's in the illegal settlements in Occupied Palestine. Most had no clue about this.

Minneapolis, MN

We, members of Middle East Peace Now and Women Against Military Madness, were at a local Ben & Jerry's Scoop Store from 11:30 to 1:30. Handed out about 250 leaflets and talked to lots of people. We are going back this evening. We were able to stand in front of the store, as well as on the heavily trafficked street at the entrance. Pictures are attached. We had sent out a press release last week and again yesterday and one channel, our local Fox Channel, KMSP 9, interviewed me on camera, but who knows what they will run. At least they were there.

We are going back from 4:30 to 6. We expect members of the MN Coalition for Palestinian Rights, MN Break the Bonds and local Veterans for Peace chapters.

There is a large orthodox Jewish community nearby and the Ben & Jerry's store owner is concerned that there will be difficulties when they bring their families for ice cream later this afternoon. I assured him that we were all peaceful people.

We returned to the Ben & Jerry's store this afternoon. There was a huge crowd. Some of the people were quite hostile, as the students from the near-by Jewish school, along with their parents, came to get their ice cream. Overall, most people accepted the flyer, several asked questions and a dozen or so thanked us for being there, saying they had no idea. The manager of the store was not happy that we were there, but he did nothing to interfere with what we were doing and brought ice cream out to those of us who wanted it. We probably handed out a total of 500 flyers. Thank you so much for starting this action and helping us participate here. Now we are on to planning a presence when Ben & Jerry come here to speak in June.

Mount Kisco, NY

Our campaign directed at Ben & Jerry's in Westchester was two-pronged: a team of two leafleted at the Westchester Mall's scoop shop in White Plains, and a larger group went as announced beforehand to the shop in Mt. Kisco. We were aware that Mall regulations and local ordinances might allow managers at the shops and security officials to interrupt our efforts. We therefore had a plan A and a plan B. Our first objective was quietly to distribute our leaflets and engage in conversation with people congregating for cones. We hoped to avoid as long as possible alerting management to our presence. We were also equipped with signs conveying our message in the event that our leafleting was shut down.

[Report #1]

During the two hour period (3-5 p.m.) scheduled in Mt. Kisco, we fielded a team that totaled eleven participants, although we never had that many on the scene at one time. We managed to distribute leaflets directly outside the scoop shop for about half an hour before two perfectly pleasant police officers arrived at the manager's demand and informed us that local ordinances prohibited distribution of leaflets without a permit but that they would tolerate our continuing to hand out materials if we moved off B&J property. Their definition of the property line and the manager's (or owner's?) proved somewhat different, the latter's being far more expansive. Unfortunately, after the police had left the scene, we had no way of ascertaining whether the manager was exaggerating the extent of his boundaries. Under the circumstances, we moved away from the shop to the side road by which most cars and pedestrians were coming and going. Displaying our signs, we continued to hand out leaflets but not in as great numbers as a position in front of the scoop shop would have allowed. The manager was belligerent and given to shouting threats, including a warning that if he resorted to phoning the police again, they would haul us away in hand-cuffs; but when we stayed beyond his declared property line, he calmed down. Later in the afternoon the stand-off eased. At one point he called out to us inquiring whether a car that he intended to have towed belonged to one of us, presumably to give us a chance to move it before it was removed.

Hundreds of people gathering for free cones saw our signs, and we managed to distribute 140 leaflets. A few individuals were receptive and willing to engage in discussion; a few others were dismissive or clearly negative; a very small number were hostile. The vast majority were polite but not terribly interested, clearly more focused on ice cream than on Occupation and its abuses. No doubt some of the leaflets were dropped into the nearest trash bin. Nonetheless, we assume that a certain number of people glanced at them casually and then read on to see why we were calling on Ben & Jerry's to stop selling ice cream in illegal Israeli settlements.

We'll be conferring in coming weeks about how to follow up this action. Vermonters for a Just Peace in Palestine/Israel, the organization that spear-headed this national Ben&Jerry's campaign endorsed by national JVP and US Campaign to End the Occupation, has engaged with management at headquarters of the company in Vermont. We need to follow up in Westchester with local managers. This is the second year that JVP-Westchester and WESPAC have co-sponsored an action on Free Cone Day. We'll evaluate the experiences and re-think strategy and tactics for next year. Certainly we need to have more specific knowledge of local ordinances and Mall regulations so that we know when police and manager-owner demands are justified. We also will continue to hone our approach to the public and review effective ways to approach different kinds of questions and attitudes.

[Report #2] I wish we had had the same luck the White Plains people did. Very shortly after we started handing out the leaflets, the manager -- who never spoke directly to us -- called the

police, who informed us that we were on private property and B&J's wants us off, and did we have a permit from the village of Mt. Kisco, which we need if we want to pass out leaflets. Yet, they shuttled us off to what they called a sidewalk they said we could stand on (where a B&J's guy said "And no signs!"), and we gave leaflets to people exiting the parking lot and held up JVP signs. A cop took my name, address and phone number ("just to show I talked to someone") and said if the manager had to call them again it would become a "criminal matter." Some of the people we gave flyers to were nasty; most were uninterested in anything but their cones and socializing, but a few expressed interest and concern.

Oakland, CA

Portland, OR (2 stores)

A total of 12 volunteers, from the local chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), Portland Palestine Coalition, Lutherans for Justice in the Holy Land, and Americans United for Equal Palestinian rights sponsored a 2 1/2 hours of educational leafleting campaign at Ben & Jerry's Pioneer Square, downtown Portland (524 SW Yamhill). Jerry [Greenfield] himself was there for a short time. We handed out 300 leaflets, (I only picked up 2 off the ground).

Our slightly modified leaflet and poster is attached, and a picture of us at the head of the line of potential slurpers--which snaked around an entire block).

Unfortunately, the manager of a youth group which was working at the store got extremely angry at us for 'ruining their day'--and called her relative, and then the president of national JVP. She made such a fuss that the head of our local JVP chapter thought it'd be more politic to move to another store. So we took the other 100 leaflets to Ben & Jerry's in the Pearl (10th & NW Everett, Portland), and handed the other 100 leaflets out over the next ~1 hour.

San Diego, CA (2 locations)

San Diego leafleted two locations. We had volunteers at Sea Port Village and Horton Plaza. Horton Plaza was really packed. We ran out of flyers at both locations. Next year we will print a lot more flyers.

San Francisco, CO (2 scoop shops)

We had abt 7 folks out there at 2 scoop shops here in SF. the feedback was all generally positive; only drawback was that we ran out of fliers. I should have been prepared & made more- I knew that wd happen; just didn't think it would happen so early.

Here's the comments I have gotten from 2 people so far:

[#1] I had a wonderful time. We were a bit selective as to whom we gave the flyers and also gave them a bit of talk about the situation. Most people listened and were very interested and some will take action. One man emailed immediately. It was worth it. One Jewish man was very concerned - worried in a good way about Israel. I wish I had had more time with him and talked about JVP, but maybe he knows.

[#2] It was a bit for nothing. Over half an hour I told a few people why I was there, including the Blazing Saddles staff next door. I did not notice any JVP people or allies. I did get some free frozen yogurt and gave a dollar to Tel-Hi.

San Jose, CA

Between 12:00noon - 8:00pm (Ben & Jerry's ran out of ice cream and closed at 8:00pm) 7 volunteers distributed about 1,096 leaflets to people lined up for their free ice cream cones. I definitely think that at least some, if not many, of the people will contact the CEO of Ben & Jerry's to tell him to stop selling ice cream there in the settlements. Some might even encourage him to stop selling ice cream in Apartheid Israel and close down the facility built on stolen Palestinian land in Qastina.

I was there from 5:00pm -8:00pm. My sister was there from 12:00noon - 8:00pm. She took a few breaks when there were more than one other person there, i.e. so that there were at least two people talking to people in the line at a time.

Most of the customers were pleasant, and many were interested to hear the information and take a leaflet.

I am hoping that by next year we can celebrate Free Cone Day because Jostein Solheim will have not only stopped selling Ben & Jerry's in illegal Israeli Settlements but will have closed down the facility in Qastina and totally stopped selling ice cream in Apartheid Israel!

Thank you very much for all your support.

South Burlington, VT

One VTJP member stood outside the B & J corporate headquarters from 7:30 – 9:00 am greeting employees with a sign and offering our leaflets. Many declined with a nice smile, and some explained that they were well aware of the content (I replied “I hope we have a better message next year”). Both CEO Jostein Solheim and Global Director of Social Mission Rob Michalak accepted a leaflet and we exchanged cordial greetings

Tacoma, WA

Two of us rendezvoused at Gig Harbor, WA Ben & Jerry's in a torrential downpour. After receiving our free cones, we put Jewish Voice for Peace Tacoma stickers on the 200 1/4 sheets we'd made up (color on one side, black and white on the other) and started to leaflet. The rain stopped and folks were not only willing to take the info (which we handed out as "some information you can read while you're waiting in line") but the overwhelming majority left with leaflet still in hand! Lots of teenagers, so this was a GREAT opportunity to reach an audience we otherwise can't reach. And today's news of Kerry blaming the negotiations fall apart due to Israel's settlements will hopefully remind those who might not have emailed yesterday!

After leafleting, I went and put a \$20 in the bucket for the proceeds that were going to Oso mudslide victims. So it was a great opportunity to give to that cause as I'd been wanting to do!

Waterbury, VT

Two of us handed out about 400 leaflets at the long line at the Ben & Jerry's factory over a period of 1 1/2 hours.

White Plains, NY

Today [two of us] went down to the Ben and Jerry's located in the Westchester Mall in White Plains, New York, to create awareness among the consumers. As we made our way to the small stand we were immediately wary of one of the managers collecting money for a charity Ben and Jerry's is sponsoring. With each person coming out with their free scoops we handed out our pamphlets, non aggressively, for them to read.

Discretely, we made it through a majority of the pamphlets in half an hour before we were noticed by the manager collecting the funds for the charity. Insisting on knowing what our motives were, while we stood around taking pictures, she was persistent to know what our brochures were about. When she was informed of our mission she surprisingly allowed us to continue.

Proceeding to take pictures and hand out of the information we were suddenly stopped by two managers of the mall and told we weren't allowed to hand out flyers. We respectfully agreed and began to leave but were still being watched. On our way out we handed one out to every person with a cone as the managers stiffly watched our every move. When they were aware we were still giving them out, one of them began to quickly follow us and was then joined by two other men, presumably mall security. Practically running out of the doors the manager stopped and glared us down until we were out of his sight.

On our way back an enormous group of school children were coming towards our direction. We took the opportunity to inform them of the situation in Palestine. Coincidentally, the school children were on their way to get their free ice cream so we gave them extra brochures to give the managers with "compliments from us".

Overall we successfully informed the public and hope that Ben and Jerry's will change their policies of selling their ice cream in these settlements.

Reports of Phone Calls:

[Caller #1] Just had a very nice conversation with Ben & Jerry's PR department person Kelly. She was very defensive, said it was a difficult subject (not really I said -- supporting segregation was dealt with in the US a long time ago), and that they had a 25 year contract with their franchisee who was meeting his social responsibility goals. That was an easy one. I said he was not, and B&J should get together with their lawyers to break the contract. Was doing business on stolen land okay by their contract? How about refusing service to customers? etc. Ended by asking her to pass on my comments.

Here's hoping her phone rings off the hook today.

By the way, I wasn't just mouthing off when I said they should get together with their lawyers and break the contract. I haven't seen their franchise contract with their franchisees, but every franchise contract has a morality or good conduct clause (what if a franchisee turned out to be a child molester for example) and reps and warranties that the franchisee complies with the laws (which I think could be interpreted to include international law). B&J's problem is not finding a legal reason to break the contract, it is that they are afraid of the blowback inside Israel if they do.

[Caller #2] I had an interesting conversation on the phone with the consumer something person at Ben and Jerry's when I called. It was a woman I spoke to, but I didn't catch her name. She was saying what she's paid to say and she listened to me like she's supposed to, but I felt we did engage - maybe beyond the usual. I think she wrote down the websites I suggested she look at for more info - I pointed to JVP's policy statement on BDS and I sent her to bdsmovement.net. It sounds like they're grappling with this. She said the company wants peace in the area and doesn't want to get involved in politics. I tried to point out that their very presence in the territories implicates them and they ARE involved. etc. etc.