



PHOTO ILLUSTRATION: DAVID RIDLEY

POURING OUR CARTS OUT If the activists had their way, shopping malls across North America would look like this.

Not buying not the solution

The focus of Buy Nothing Day should be teaching consumers how to make wiser purchasing choices—not simply abstaining from shopping for 24 hours



JONN KMECH

Thanksgiving weekend begins in the United States tomorrow, which traditionally inaugurates the Christmas shopping season in North America. To the more socially conscious, this day is known more colloquially as "Black Friday," where millions of wild-eyed consumers give thanks for the goodwill amongst humanity by trampling others to death in a desperate struggle to get big savings on the latest toys and consumer electronics.

Following the customs of the Pilgrims, who kicked off the holiday season by persecuting nonbelievers, North Americans celebrate their fortunes on one of the busiest shopping days of the year by persecuting the guy with the last remaining Furby. Every Christmas, there's that one product that sends shoppers into a maniacal, irrational frenzy wherein they're compelled to obtain it, even if it means increasing the size of their crow's feet by staying on eBay until 5am to bid \$1200 for the latest stuffed animal that mutters five phrases and enjoys being tickled.

This Christmas is no exception, for there's a new product with such a powerful ability to warm the heart that I myself must brave the stampeding marauders to acquire it. Armed only with an indomitable will and a can of

mace, I need this item on Friday, as well as eight more for my friends and relatives, before they inevitably sell out.

I speak, of course, of Volume Two of the *Faux Fire* DVD (as seen on by Shaw TV), just released this month.

However, there are some individuals out there who oppose this shopping frenzy. In fact, these rebels want me to abstain from purchasing anything Friday, and instead believe that we should observe something called Buy Nothing Day (BND).

BND, then, is ultimately as shallow and worthless as the Faux Fire. It may look classy and make you feel warm inside, but it's merely a superficial solution to the actual problem.

2007 marks the 15th-annual BND, in which social activists take to the streets, riding on their moral high horses to protest Black Friday and rampant consumerism while carrying banners made with materials they produced themselves and wearing clothing they stitched completely by hand after they both grew and gathered the hemp in their basements.

The day is promoted by *Adbusters* magazine as a time to make a "lifestyle commitment to consuming less and producing less waste," the only

exceptions being the purchase of *Adbusters* magazine or a pair of \$99 Black Spot sneakers.

This whole concept infuriates me. Who are they to stand between me and my dream of viewing burning logs in the comfort and safety of my own home? Sure, I own a copy of Volume One, but that's useless and old. This one has *eight new songs*.

Then it dawned on me: the sole problem with BND is myself. As consumers, we've gotten used to getting the latest things, no matter how unnecessary. But people are always going to buy—it's how our society is set up. Instead, we need to change attitudes about what we buy and whether these products have worth so that they don't just become waste filling our closets and landfills. In that respect, BND sends the wrong message and doesn't address the real issue. The problem is overconsumption of stuff we don't need, not buying in general.

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This Friday, people should observe Buy Something Day (trademark pending). Such an event could send the message that though buying is okay, we should curb our spending to something useful, special, or necessary. This could resonate more effectively with consumers and actually have an impact on the egregious amounts of bullshit that we buy.

Now if you'll excuse me, I'm going to go roast chestnuts over an open television screen.

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