

# Black Friday, Walmart and Consumer Culture: The Scam That Stole Thanksgiving

8:19pm November 25, 2012



*By Julianne Malveaux*

When I think of Thanksgiving Day, I think of family, gathered around a table that groans with turkey and dressing, green beans and candied yams, mac and cheese or whipped potatoes, and lots of other goodies. I look forward to seeing folks I haven't seen in awhile, savor the food and fellowship, bring in the late evening over coffee and pie. Nobody is rushing out to go shopping – most people save that for the Friday after Thanksgiving, often called Black Friday, because many stores find themselves in the black after the profligate shopping that day.

There have been tragedies associated with Black Friday shopping. A few years back a Walmart employee was trampled to death by a crowd way too eager to get to the consumer goods. There have also been fights, altercations, bruises, and cuts as customers have vied for some of the scarce

goods available or for crazy deals (often only for the first 200 people). Lines often snake around stores as people wait for a chance for a bargain.

Now Walmart has upped the ante. Last year they opened at 10 p.m. and this year they will open at 8 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day. Just when folks settle down from their meal and start swapping lies, someone is going to have to get up and rush to work so they can serve those consumers who want to shop on Thanksgiving Day.

Many of those who will work do so out of desperation. Many Walmart employees don't have a full forty-hour shift; some find their hours adjusted each week.

Thanksgiving work will augment scarce incomes. Just this week, I talked with a couple whose joint income at Walmart is \$26,000 a year, partly because neither has a full week's schedule.

There are those who say, "well, why do they work there then," suggesting that there are easy alternatives. But Walmart is one of our nation's largest employers, and they often set the tone for similar stores like Best Buy, Sears and others. With Walmart opening at 8 p.m. on Thanksgiving, their competitors will follow because they don't want to lose momentum to Walmart.

This is why the Making Change at Walmart campaign is so important. It challenges the notion that economic growth is dependent on the exploitation of workers, and suggests, instead, that paying people a living wage is a way to grow a stable and secure workforce.

Walmart is not the only company that prefers to pay its workers on a part-time basis. Many fast-food operations do the same thing, varying hours each week so that workers have no way of knowing when they will work. This means they have difficulty arranging for childcare with these variable hours. Of course, that this does not concern their employers. They are more interested in their bottom line, profits.












Many who are aware of the labor exploitation at Walmart say that their prices

and deals are unbeatable, and with their money tight they have no choice but to seek the best bargains they can find. Yet the price of the great deals is exploitation of another worker.

The action to inform Walmart customers about Walmart's unfair pay and illegal actions allows people who shop on Thanksgiving Day and on other days to make informed decisions about their shopping. One of the ways consumers can make a statement is to stay home on Thanksgiving Day, enjoying family, giving thanks, and postponing shopping.

Source: <http://politic365.com/2012/11/25/black-friday-walmart-and-consumer-culture-the-scam-that-stole-thanksgiving/2/>

### History of Major Retailers Opening on Thanksgiving for the First Time

Pre-2010				
2010				
2011				
2012				
2013				

# **“Black Friday: The Scam that Stole Thanksgiving”**

## **Close Reading Questions**

**Directions:** Write the answers to the following questions and cite from the article to support your responses.

1. Vocabulary Words Key words to define. You may use context clues or a dictionary to define the terms below.
  - a) Black Friday
  - b) Profligate
2. Read again the first sentence of the article in which the author employs the use of personification. Why personification? What point is she trying to illustrate?
3. Read below what author Thomas Hine told *USA Today*.

"Thanksgiving is not as sanctified a day as it was even a few years ago," author Thomas Hine told *USA Today*.

Is this a supporting or opposing argument to Malveaux's premise? How do you know?
4. What evidence is there that the author's purpose was more persuasive than informative?
5. How did this author's bias transform the content of the article?
6. Take a look at the infographic sidebar about the history of stores opening on Thanksgiving Day. Write a few trends you notice in the data, and then make an inference about those trends in relation to whether or not our commercial influences have affected the true meaning of this holiday.

Good-Graph-Friday

# Good Graph Black Friday: Holiday shopping stats



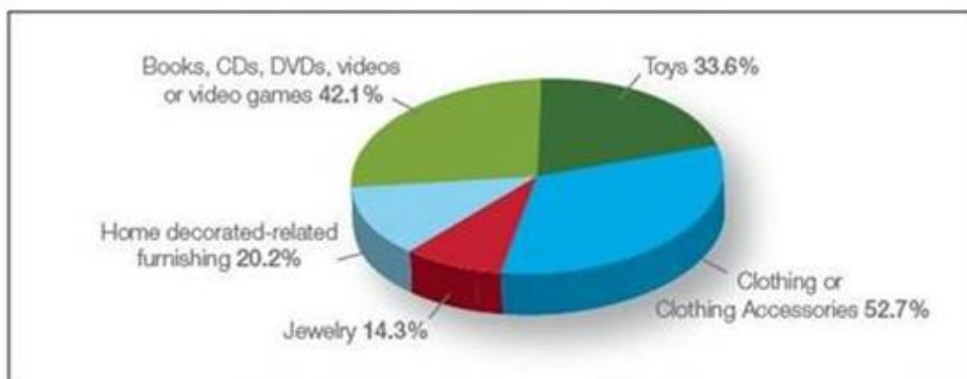
Allison Linn  
CNBC

Nov. 25, 2011 at 7:50 AM ET

The holiday season can be a make-or-break it time for retailers: It made up nearly 20 percent of total retail industry sales last year, according to the National Retail Federation, a trade group. Those stocking stuffers and sweaters added up to a whopping \$453 million.



What Holiday Shoppers Bought Black Friday Weekend



## Black Friday Holiday Shopping Stats Questions for Analysis

**Directions:** Use the graphics to answer the questions below. Be sure to cite the graphs and write in complete sentences.

1. Look at the bar graph. What conclusions can be drawn about shopping on Black Friday based on this data?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. The article states that the holiday season can be a “make-or-break” time for retailers.
  - a. Which is graph is best for answering this question?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  - b. Do the graphs show success or failure for retailers in these years? How do you know?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Summarize the data presented in the pie chart.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What can be inferred about our society based on the data from the pie chart?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. What one item is at the top of your wish list?