

# Sanity trampled in Black Friday rush

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STAFF WRITER

Shopping during the holidays has become as much a part of American culture as football and fast food. To many, shopping is no longer just about buying and exchanging gifts. For millions it has become an obsession with scouring for the best deals.

We have even devoted an entire day to reveling in nationwide discounts and sales: Black Friday, where retailers mark down their prices by as much as 70 percent in order to attract hordes of excited customers.

And on this year's Black Friday, that drive to save a few bucks was enough to push a boisterous mob of early-bird holiday shoppers crashing through the glass doors of a New York Wal-Mart, trampling everyone that stood in its way.

This included a man who was trampled to death. All in the name of reaching the juicy deals a little bit faster.

The whole notion of Black Friday just isn't worth it. This wasn't the first time that someone was killed by a horde of excited shoppers on Black Friday; this type of thing has happened for years with no effort towards a solution. People were quick to cite the lack of store security as the culprit behind the chaos that ensued that morning, but extra security would have hardly made a difference. It's physically impossible to post adequate security for all businesses.

The only feasible solution to this madness would be for businesses to stop making the price cuts altogether. At first

glance, it appears this would end up hurting businesses. But to many of them, it would actually be beneficial. According to many economists, most retailers gain little, if any, profit from the Black Friday ordeal.

Although the stores experience a surge in their customer base, the fact that prices have been marked down by as much as 70 percent means that businesses then have to sell anywhere from two to four times as much merchandise just to break even.

Many retailers, unable to sell enough products to keep up with their discounts, actually lose money. So why do American retailers continue this inane custom year after year? Perhaps it is because it has become somewhat of an American tradition. Stores feel pressured to make excessive discounts in order to please their customer base and compete with other stores.

What businesses do not realize, however, is that if they all were to stop Black Friday together, none would suffer these negative effects. Americans are consumers by nature, and will always return to the shops, no matter how angry they may be over the end to a day of discounts.

The end to Black Friday would benefit all Americans: business owners by no longer having to endure this ordeal with such little profit gain, and police forces, by not wasting their time acting as temporary store security. And despite the inevitable anger most shoppers would pose, they too would benefit.

After all, what shopper wants to get trampled over a pair of discounted shoes?



## Praise or Folly

Christmas time! Cut down a tree, put it inside... Take these lights, put them outside... Leave out cookies for a fat bearded intruder... All for baby Jesus!

-Tim Chu

Doctors' offices probably overflow this time of year. There's the 5-year-old with a cold, the 10-year-old with the flu, and the high school senior with a severe case of anxiety and depression.

-Jolene Xie

I know with the upcoming holiday break, most of us will be using the weeks off for memorizing our AP prep books. I have one piece of advice for all you study bugs out there: fresh air.

-Anna Mills

I don't understand those who travel thousands of miles to Rockefeller Center for a giant Christmas tree or those who fly to Chicago for a "white Christmas." I mean why go that far when you can get all the joys of Christmas by posing for a picture with a cardboard Santa right here in PQ?

-Yoojin Kim

My New Year's Resolution it to remember the one I made last year.

-Michelle Marshall

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# Online lessons prove helpful for students

Andrew Fan  
STAFF WRITER

YouTube is our friend, especially when we can watch classes online.

Sanjevi Subbiah's Calculus AB classes have the opportunity to go on YouTube and see the lessons online. Every day, Subbiah records the lesson from one class period and posts it online for absent students or students who need to review their lessons.

If all teachers posted their lessons online, students would have an opportunity to perform better. They could review the lesson at home and use it to study for tests.

Westview's 4x4 schedule moves faster than the traditional high school, which means more notes to copy and more finals and midterms to take. With lessons posted online, students have access to more resources besides their books and notes.

In the 4x4, students may tend to forget whatever was

taught in the first semester, which can be especially detrimental in AP courses.

Because the AP test is in May, students need to find ways to review all the material that they finish learning. With the online videos, the students only have to spend a small amount of time every day watching and reviewing information that could have been forgotten.

Teachers may say that students will decide to cut classes because they can just watch the videos online at home.

However, students who don't care enough to go to their classes probably won't take the time to watch these videos daily either. Their mind-set is that they could watch all of the videos the night before the exam.

This means that the night before midterms and finals will be spent cramming and watching each of the 80-minute class periods all at once. This discourages students who think that these videos can replace class time.

Not only that, but if students cut class, they miss out

on participating in discussions, getting help, and taking potential pop quizzes, which is also harmful to their grade.

However, for students who missed a problem during class or forgot the year of an important battle, they would be able to use the videos in addition to whatever other resources they might have.

Teachers have their own teaching style and some do not follow a textbook. Everything they teach in class will not be written down word for word, and the textbook will not help at all. If that is the case, then all the student would have to do is go online and check the video of that day's lesson.

Even though there might be unforeseen technical problems, such as a server crash, this system could be beneficial for the students who pay attention and show up to class. With the ability to look online for a lesson taught four days previously, students would be able to have another resource to study from, and hopefully earn higher grades and learn more.

# In season of cutbacks, tree should be last to go

Ben Blaustein  
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Many age-old traditions of Christmas seem to slowly vanish every year, from singing carols on street corners to roasting chestnuts on an open fire. And much to the pleasure of Ebenezer Scrooge, putting up and decorating an authentic Christmas tree has recently joined the ranks of disappearing festivities.

Over the past decade, there has been a recent jump in the popularity of the artificial Christmas tree, a plastic substitute for the traditional conifer. This trend exemplifies a belittling of established holiday practices. Putting up a live Christmas tree is a time-honored practice that Americans need to continue in order to preserve the spirit of Christmas.

One unmatched quality of a real Christmas tree is its fresh scent that permeates the entire house. Even catching a subtle trace of

the old-fashioned pine smell can evoke those joyous childhood memories of sitting around the tree on Christmas morning or setting out cookies for Santa on Christmas Eve.

Fake Christmas trees, however, smell like plastic. Instead of the classic, noble appearance of a true pine, they look, well, fake. Phony. Synthetic. When fingers brush across a branch, it doesn't feel like a real Christmas tree with pine needles dropping en masse. The spirit of Christmas is preserved in all the sensual experiences of a good, live tree. But they are more than lost with an artificial tree. They are denigrated.

Eighty-five percent of fake trees are imported from factories in China, where workers earn no more than \$100 per month squatting in front of hissing machinery, melting moldable chips into plastic needles.

These fake trees are assembled using metals and plastics, which can be a potential

source of hazardous lead. In fact, the possibility for lead poisoning is great enough that fake trees from China are required by California Proposition 65 to carry a warning label.

Thus, purchasing a fake promotes no environmental benefits. Purchasing a real, dignified conifer does far more environmental good because evergreens take in carbon dioxide and release oxygen into the air.

Chopping down Christmas trees does not harm the environment either. Hardly anyone actually ventures out into the wilderness to cut down a Christmas tree. The vast majority are bred on a tree farm for the sole purpose of becoming Christmas trees, and another tree is planted for each one harvested.

Not only this, but these tree farms help sustain the rural economy and provide jobs. People work to grow, transport and eventually sell the tree so that families can enjoy the beautiful coniferous tree in their own home.

Artificial trees are also falsely advertised as fire resistant. Overloaded electrical outlets and faulty wires are the most common causes of house fires, both of which are just as likely to occur with artificial trees. In fact, in 2004, a Detroit fire department compared the two.

The artificial tree resisted initially, but then was engulfed in flames and projected significant heat and toxic smoke. The real tree however, properly maintained and watered, was left nearly unscathed.

Ultimately, families will choose what they want, and the unfortunate growing trend is a rise in the artificial tree.

In spite of the minor increase in cost and house cleanup of pine needles, a genuine conifer represents the traditional spirit of Christmas. One thing Americans should not and cannot compromise is on putting up a true Christmas tree, because it is truly sad to see it slowly usurped by a fake.

# Union demands for auto companies prove unrealistic

Madison Yuill  
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The Union of Auto Workers (UAW) is a slowly dying cause.

As car companies like General Motors begin to sink under the wave of near bankruptcy and bailouts, so does the union that has crippled the motor giant.

The UAW, along with bad business decisions and outdated car models has played a crucial role to the fall of the auto company General Motors, as well as the other auto factories failing in Detroit.

By costing GM heavy additional expenses to care for its workers, the UAW is actually hindering the workers: it's quickly killing the company that gives those workers their jobs.

The philosophy behind the union was a noble one: Give workers the ability to gain fair wages and benefits without the fear of losing their jobs, but the demands of the UAW for its workers were simply too much for the auto companies to handle.

The heightened wages, benefits and the 400,000 retirees that GM must support was a major blow to GM's finances, crippling them as they tried to compete with foreign car markets and models where work is either outsourced or done in un-unionized factories.

While it was a nice idea, maybe in a perfect world, GM could not afford to give almost every union employee so much.

It got to the point where GM was actually losing money with each car assembled and sold because it had so many obligations to fill financially.

The average non-union worker in an auto plant makes \$25.65 an hour according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Compare that to the \$36.34 that the union workers make an hour (factoring in benefits), and you can see how the auto industry would lose money.

And while it is a great theory to have all of the employees gain higher wages and get health care and great pensions, the fact is that financially, it is unrealistic.

The UAW bullying auto makers like GM into accepting their demands has not only been part of the fall of the auto giant, but could possibly lose all the jobs of the people that the union was trying to protect.

With GM having to drag 400,000 retirees and thousands of highly-paid employees, many people stand to be devastated if this bailout does not pass.

But if it does, GM and other auto industries cannot continue to fund the fantastic demands of the unions.

Unions keep a balance of power, and therefore should remain in existence, but they must realize the gravity and unrealistic nature of their demands.

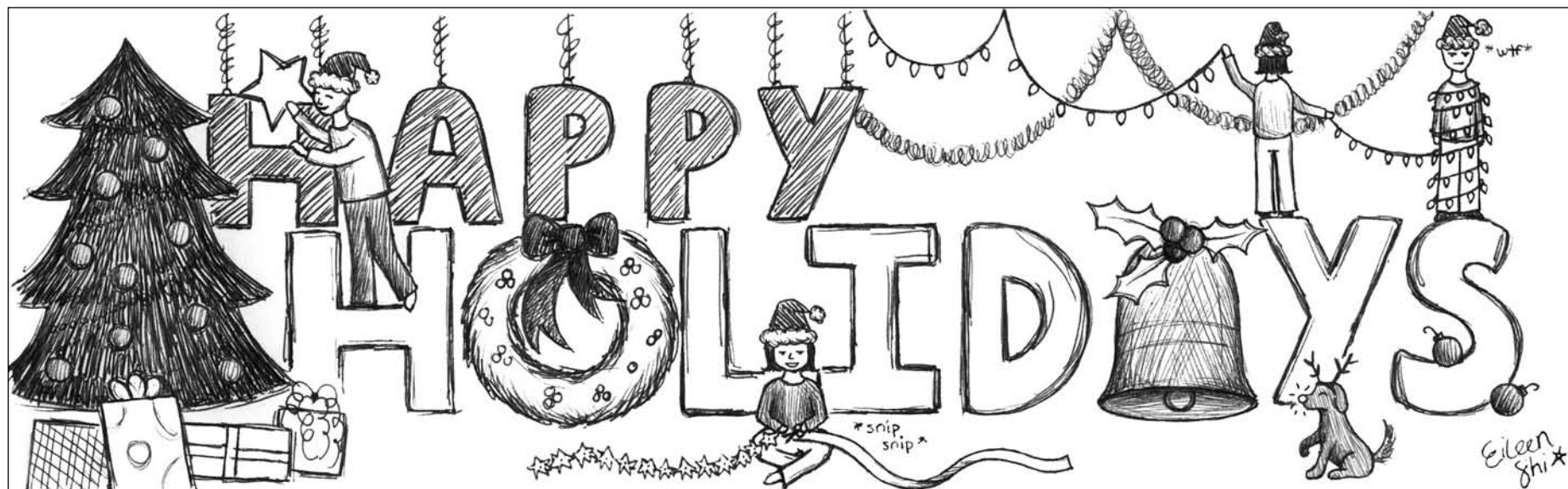
They cannot continue to require so much for the employees they represent, because in essence, GM can not afford to coddle all these workers.

And at the end of the day, UAW must take into consideration the welfare of the companies that employ their members, which it has neglected to do as it continued to add obligations to the company that has been struggling for years.

At the end of the day, what is best for the company is best for the employees, because if the company goes under, so do the employees represented by the union.

# My Little Rintrah

by Eileen Shi



# Xie's Rebellion

by Jolene Xie

