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## Reflections On Black Friday 2012 Walmart Protest

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In recent years, Black Friday – the day after Thanksgiving and the unofficial start of the holiday shopping season – has been a day of great excitement for me. I’ve been pumped about the day not because of the so-called discounts, free give-a-ways, or any other aspect of this celebration of capitalism. Black Friday has been a source of enthusiasm for me because of the grand opportunity to publicly challenge the spirit of rampant consumerism, materialism, and economic exploitation head-on. My “observance” of Black Friday this year took the form of joining a nationally coordinated effort to stand in solidarity with Walmart workers in their demand for justice on the job.

The Organization United For Respect At Walmart, a nonprofit organization backed by the United Food & Commercial Workers (UFCW) union, is one of the groups that helped lead protests on Black Friday 2012. Their website reports that in June 2011, nearly 100 Walmart Associates representing thousands of workers showed up to the store’s headquarters in Bentonville, Arkansas to declare their demands to Walmart executives. A part of their message included demands for a minimum wage of \$13/hour and full time positions for workers who wanted them, affordable healthcare, and benefits that ensured that no Walmart Associate would have to depend on government assistance.

People sympathetic to this cause showed up at the Towson Walmart this past Friday morning to add their voices to the national cry for economic justice and worker's rights. Though small in number, this particular group was persistent. As the store manager was anxious to shoo us away with the support of plain-clothes police officers, we refused to budge from the front door of the store until we delivered our signed letter of support for Walmart workers. We were then told that we had to leave the Towson Place Shopping Center. We were not welcome anywhere on the grounds according to the police officers that were working at the behest of Kimco Realty – the current owner of the shopping center.

Though completely removed from the property, our mixed group of activists, organizers, and representatives from the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) raised voices and signs for justice on Joppa Road as shoppers entered and exited the complex. In a move to discredit the impact of national protests, [Walmart reported](#) [3] that it had its best "Black Friday" ever – recording more than 10 million register transactions in the first four hours of last weekend's sales bonanza which began this year on Thursday night.

While many outcomes of last weekend are debatable, there is no question that more people are paying attention today to Walmart's treatment of its workers and the company's impact on the country and world as the largest retailer in the United States. In addition, last week's protests sparked the imagination of countless thousands of workers and consumers alike who realized that in this campaign, there is something that everyone can do.

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**Source URL:** <https://indyreader.org/content/reflections-black-friday-2012-walmart-protest>

**Links:**

[1] <https://indyreader.org/contributor/reverend-heber-brown-iii>

[2] <https://indyreader.org/contributor/casey-mckeel>

[3] [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/23/walmart-best-black-friday\\_n\\_2178541.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/11/23/walmart-best-black-friday_n_2178541.html)