

## AFTER CHRISTMAS SALES NOT WHAT YOU THINK

By Zoe Mitchell

UNITED STATES—It is official America, Christmas is over. Yeah, you might be thinking, why are you so happy about that? Well, Christmas can just be stressful as hell, because there is just so much going on to juggle. You have work, you have family, you have gift buying, you have shopping, you have food, it's just the time of year that should be joyous and sometimes isn't as joyous as you want it to be. With that said, the shopping is not over. All that spending you did for others; now shifts the focus to the spending for you.

The retailers are about to see the biggest drop in foot traffic as January 1, 2024 rolls around. People are not spending as much because you have to consider all the money and debt you have occurred over

the year. So the spending will slow quite a bit, while all the kiddos, tweens, teens, young adults and adults who received gift cards and cash for the holiday are starting to spend.

The mall the day after Christmas was an absolute beast. I mean the crowds, the crowds, the crowds. I don't know if it is an age thing or what, but I'm over the crowds. You have people who don't walk, people who walk too slow or those who just stand in the walkway without realizing you're not invisible. Did the stores have sales? It depends where you go. Some of the big box retailers had deals, I mean when you can get 75 to 80 percent, even 90 percent off some items at some stores that is a huge savings.

I say that quite often with plenty of food

products, and Christmas attire, sheets, towels, clothing, the deals are so good sometimes you just cannot resist. I tried, but the deals told my wallet you will be screaming at yourself if you don't get it. Now on the flipside, I did venture into some stores and I was telling myself, where is the sale? Yeah, there was no sale, and I think the retailers were thinking people are going to spend no matter what, and I do believe that to a degree.

People had extra money and that money was burning a hole in the pocket; gotta spend when in truth you can just hold onto that money. There is no need to spend if you don't have to spend America. Could you do all your Xmas shopping for 2024 in 2023? It is very possible, but where are you going to store them and do

you really want to do that? It doesn't hurt, but the goal has to be simplicity and realize a deal compared to a gimmick.

I did see a few items that made the consumer think they were getting a deal because of the 80 percent off sign, but if you think about it, it wasn't. Why? It's the same price for the item when it is a regular sale. The retailers know how to hook you with numbers, so if you're not careful you will spend money thinking you got a deal, when you just got hoodwinked. So before you open the wallet and give out the green or swipe that plastic ask yourself these 3 things: 1) Do I need it 2) Do I want it 3) Will I use it. If you cannot answer YES to all three, you already have the answer.

## EXHAUSTION FROM THE HOLIDAY HUSTLE AND BUSTLE

By Trevor Roberts

UNITED STATES—Gosh, these past 2 weeks have been absolutely crazy. I mean crazy. Between work and the holidays my mind is fried. I really didn't realize how crazy the holiday hustle and bustle can be. As a kid, I didn't see it as a big deal; I thought our family was always busy. As an adult, I'm starting to realize the holiday hustle and bustle is just as crazy. I admit I enjoy having the Christmas holiday off. That is the 1 time during the year that I actually get off.

I'm not joking. Can you imagine working almost 364 days in a year if you never took a day off? You might think it is foreign, but there are those worker horses out there who indulge in such. I'm not one of those people, but around the holidays my place of business just becomes super busy so the chaos is chaotic. Between December 21 and December 26 I have no clue how much sleep I got, I feel like I got little if anything, except on Christmas Day

because that is the one day during the year, I sleep until I cannot sleep if possible. I don't force my body to get up, I let myself rest as much as possible because the day before was work hell and the day after was work hell also.

With that said, I had a funeral to attend over the weekend, in the midst of still working. On Christmas Eve, I had to work, and when I got off work, I was rushing to the mall to pick up some last minute gifts and I absolutely hate going to the mall on Christmas Eve. You have to deal with crowds that are just unbelievable and people drive like absolute idiots. I'm sorry, I have never seen drivers so careless and flippant than on Xmas Eve where everyone is trying to find a parking spot and the notion of paying attention to the road just seems to disappear. Take leaving the mall, rushing home and wrapping gifts to ensure when people stop by or you make stops to family and friends you have their gift(s)

ready to go. So Christmas morning arrives and it is time to gather up the gifts, and start making the rounds. Making phone calls, stopping by people's homes, having a snack or a bit of food here and there, but also not staying too long because you have other places to go.

If you have to work the next day, which not only did I and a ton of family members I know had to work the day after. You realize you don't want to be out all night, even though Christmas Day feels like the 1 day of the year that time moves like a snail which is an actual good thing. I don't understand it, but as workers we have this weird psychology about work. Even if you have a day off, the day you have off, you're always thinking I have to work the next day so your mind really can never be at rest which is a true bummer. If there is someone who knows how to alleviate this unnecessary worry or stress please contact me ASAP.

I just feel like I am moving so much it is driving me bonkers as of late. I mean I'm leaving home at like 7 or 8 in the morning and I'm not getting home till 7 or 8 p.m. or later that day. I might clean myself up a bit and I'm hopping right into bed. I might tell myself I am going to lay down for a second or two, but in all truth America, I'm out cold. The only caveat is that it is so short-lived. I mean I sleep great for about 30 minutes to 2 hours, but I wish I could do that for a full 6, 7 or bless the powers that be 8 hours.

The great thing is that we have about another week of this craziness of the holidays before we can actually decompress. After New Year's Day, the opportunity to potentially rest becomes a reality for me. I cannot wait, I really cannot wait until I can take a two-day vacation to just sit on the couch or in bed and do nothing for 24 hours; my mind and body so needs it.

## DO YOU LIKE TO GROCERY SHOP?

By Jason Jones

UNITED STATES—I had the oddest conversation recently with someone that made me think? Hmm, I never thought about that, but grocery shopping is it something you enjoy doing. I know people and I mean plenty of people who HATE with a passion going to the grocery store. For me, it is something I actually find solace doing. I guess it does depend on where you shop and when you shop. Something I have learned from experience is that shopping at a grocery store an hour or right before they close is the absolute worst.

You do not ever want to do that. Many of the various departments in that grocery store are prepping to shut down the department. Rather it is the meat department or deli counter, if you're not getting there in time you're going to be out of luck on getting those items that you want. In addition, you might find those sale items lim-

ited when it comes to stock if the item is popular.

For example, retailers are very odd nowadays. Some stores stock during the day, others stock during the night, and then there are those who are always stocking which is precisely what you want to see transpire. I find nothing more frustrating than heading to the grocery store when I need food and I cannot find any of the items I want because the stock is limited or things are sold out. It feels like a wasted trip to the grocery store if you're asking me.

With that said, I actually like grocery shopping, especially when I'm doing it alone. You can really take your time, you mingle with the workers a bit and when you shop at a store on a regular basis they remember your face which is always a great thing. However, the crowds can be a bummer at the grocery store. That I do not like

because it makes it harder for you to find the items you choose and it is not as easy to get in and out of the store like you choose to.

I love combing thru the produce department because I'm picky about my fruits and veggies. I am the same way about meat and seafood. Not everyone knows how to pick up good beef, chicken and fish. Also when you solo shop you don't find yourself purchasing items you don't want or need. The absolute worse is bringing kids to the store. I swear kids will put any and everything they want into the cart without you realizing it until the cashier is ringing up all those items. Before you know it, a \$200 trip easily becomes a \$350 to \$400 trip.

Grocery shopping for me is my alone time. I get to just clear my brain and purchase items I need to fuel my body and mind. I don't think a lot of Americans think

about grocery shopping in this fashion, but guess what, they actually should. Do not look at it like having to cook dinner, look at it like having the time to decompress, having the ability to fuel yourself, and most important control what you spend. Yeah, if you're visiting those club retailers and certain stores at the wrong time of the day you may not find things as exciting, but you can easily shift that with an adjustment in your schedule if possible.

Then again, I'm only visiting the grocery store once a week, I'm not going 2-3 times in a single week, but I don't do all my shopping in one place either. I have one store for my pantry and fridge staples, then another when it comes to my produce, meat and those specialty items I enjoy. Even if you're not a fan of grocery shopping there is a way to find the good in the bad, you just have to figure out what that is.