

(Ebook pdf) The Overloaded Liberal: Shopping, Investing, Parenting, and Other Daily Dilemmas in an Age of Political Activism

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Fran Hawthorne

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The OVERLOADED LIBERAL

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and Other Daily Dilemmas
in an Age of Political Activism



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Fran Hawthorne : The Overloaded Liberal: Shopping, Investing, Parenting, and Other Daily Dilemmas in an Age of Political Activism before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Overloaded Liberal: Shopping, Investing, Parenting, and Other Daily Dilemmas in an Age of Political Activism:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A closer look at living green and good,By Lesley ToppingFran Hawthorne's book, "The Overloaded Liberal" is a great read loaded with interesting information about the dilemmas of trying to make the right choices for ourselves, our families and the common good. Many of us want to be more environmentally conscientious, feed our family healthy food and buy products we know are not made with unfair labor practices, but it's not that easy. Fran Hawthorne shows us how we can try to do this and points out the pros and cons of the choices we face daily. Do we buy locally or pick the organic produce from abroad? Are we aware of the environmental impact of transporting organic produce? What really happens to the computer parts we thought we recycled? The over whelmed consumer, vegan or meat eater has to face all kinds of contradictions in a complex, global economy. This book takes a closer look at our most basic assumptions about living green, fair and wisely. How saintly are the companies we love, like Ben and Jerry's or Whole Foods? Hawthorne reports this and more in a clever witty style. I highly recommend this informative and well-researched book.0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Intelligent and ProactiveBy BookreporterAs our nation debated President Obama's health care legislation, the CEO and founder of Whole Foods, John Mackey, presented his own proposals for a free-market health care system. In doing so, he slammed the Obama plan. Given the perception of Whole Foods as a haven for progressives, many customers were stunned that its leadership would take a position opposing health care reform. A "Boycott Whole Foods" page on Facebook quickly had more than 16,000 members.This past week, the Governor of Arizona signed into law a controversial immigration law. Within minutes, calls were being made for opponents of the legislation to boycott Arizona tourism.These are the times in which we live. On a regular basis, consumers are called upon to boycott companies and products that support policies we find offensive. More than ever, we are told to vote with our checkbook or perhaps in a more modern fashion with our credit cards and PayPal accounts.For those who believe that the political consumer battles of the 21st century have significance, THE OVERLOADED LIBERAL by Fran Hawthorne may be your shopping guide. In a light, breezy and sometimes humorous style, Hawthorne confronts the dilemma of applying contemporary political values to everyday market decisions, which are not as simple as many would think.The aforementioned Whole Foods and its competitor, Costco, exemplify the quandary created by principled shopping. By classic definition, Costco is the big-box behemoth that progressive shoppers should avoid. Through pricing and size, it has destroyed many small independent merchants. Whole Foods labels products by country of origin. The produce is organic, additive-free and clearly marked for consumers. Yet Costco is a more labor-friendly organization than Whole Foods. Therein lies the rub: Do you buy at Costco, the more labor-friendly store, or do you support the smaller merchant where prices may be higher? No one said that politically active shopping was easy.THE OVERLOADED LIBERAL is honest enough to recognize that strict application of progressive values might paralyze shoppers altogether. It is difficult to purchase clothing that was not manufactured in a country where workers are treated in a fashion that Americans would consider deplorable. But one person's sweatshop is another's desirable job that, by local standards, produces a more than adequate standard of living. Do you protest the poor working conditions by boycotting the merchandise? If you do, then your wardrobe will be very limited.Hawthorne does not provide readers with an easy answer to shopping in an age of political activism. But that was not her intention in this book. Pointing out that these decisions are not easy and often have wide-ranging implications open the reader's eyes to the difficulty of consumerism in this era. As another example, joining food co-ops with volunteer workers may mean that grocery stores will cut jobs and workers will lose salaries. Selecting foreign organic products over chemically produced domestic items may seem beneficial, but those foreign items come at the cost of carbon emissions from shipping them around the globe. There is a cost for everything, often measured in something beyond dollars.This is a thoughtful and provocative book. By the way, the issues raised here are not solely for those on the left side of the political spectrum. Many conservatives confront similar moral dilemmas as they purchase food, clothing and appliances. But finding common ground on this issue has become as difficult as every other political debate. Regardless of your political views, THE OVERLOADED LIBERAL will help you address consumerism in the era of politically active shopping.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. Fabulous reflection on the eternal struggle of "Good Intentions!"By LABookFull disclosure: My original interest in this book was to see which well-intentioned folks and organizations were in there. HOWEVER, it was riotous good fun and a quick, information-packed read. I could relate with both empathy and humor to the angst the author described experiencing . The most valuable aspect of the book was her ability to offer up some practical approaches that might contribute to a longer lifespan for our planet. She thoughtfully and personally reflects on how we can all make more meaningful consumer decisions, while reminding us that our lives our so much more that our presence in the marketplace.

We live in a society that is at once the most politically aware and the most consumer oriented in human history. Twenty-first-century shoppers don't just consume; we investigate and categorize the impact of our decisions on climate change, animals, our health, our political views, geopolitical relationships, working conditions, and more. Yet when we actually try to live according to our principles, it can be so overwhelming, contradictory, and demanding that we want to scream. Every step, every dollar, every swipe of a paper towel has become a decision that can make the world a better—or worse—place.Take one daily dilemma: what jacket should I buy? If it was made in El Salvador,

China, or Vietnam, was it sewn by workers in a sweatshop at near-starvation wages, forced to labor twenty-hour days in dangerous conditions? Are those jobs actually considered desirable in those countries? Can I even find a jacket made in the United States? If I do, should I insist on union-made? But what if that's more expensive? And what fabric is it made of? Does it contain animal skins? Is the cotton organic? What kind of dyes were used? Does it have fair-trade certification? Oh, and by the way: does it look good on me? Veteran journalist and levelheaded mom Fran Hawthorne sets out to answer these questions—and spark more. En route, she interviews activists and ordinary consumers alike, including officials from PETA, the AFL-CIO, the Sierra Club, an organization of "EcoMoms," and the rabbinical group that has redefined kosher. She learns from ethicists, psychologists, Wall Street analysts, child-rearing experts, and policy wonks, while examining everything from Barack Obama's union-made inaugural ball tuxedo to the conundrum of how electric cars might obtain their electricity. And she delves into socially responsible investing at a moment when the wheels have come off the economy. Her odyssey will be all-too familiar and often funny for consumers who have thrown up their hands and wondered, "What's a good liberal to do?"

From Booklist Hawthorne presents many issues facing the average liberal who seeks to be politically active but is often overwhelmed by the daunting challenges created by informed choice. From what to eat to what to invest in, she makes it clear that what seems obvious (American Apparel's Normal 0 MicrosoftInternetExplorer4 /* Style Definitions */ table.MsoNormalTable {mso-style-name:Table Normal; mso-tstyle-rowband-size:0; mso-tstyle-colband-size:0; mso-style-noshow:yes; mso-style-parent:; mso-padding-alt:0in 5.4pt 0in 5.4pt; mso-para-margin:0in; mso-para-margin-bottom:.0001pt; mso-pagination:widow-orphan; font-size:10.0pt; font-family:Times New Roman;} "Made in the USA Normal 0 MicrosoftInternetExplorer4 /* Style Definitions */ table.MsoNormalTable {mso-style-name:Table Normal; mso-tstyle-rowband-size:0; mso-tstyle-colband-size:0; mso-style-noshow:yes; mso-style-parent:; mso-padding-alt:0in 5.4pt 0in 5.4pt; mso-para-margin:0in; mso-para-margin-bottom:.0001pt; mso-pagination:widow-orphan; font-size:10.0pt; font-family:Times New Roman;}" label) is likely far less so under careful observation (American Apparel's anti-union stance). Do we care more about country of origin or price? Local or organic? Should an eco-minded shopper buy anything from a Big Box store? These are basic questions, but Hawthorne doesn't sugarcoat the often difficult answers. In fact, contrary to green guides that say any effort is good, Hawthorne counters that weighing in on national legislation is really the only truly effective way to change the world. With the exception of a self-serving lecture on supporting Israel in the final pages, this is a solid choice for those willing to dive into the complexity of living with a social conscious in the twenty-first century. --Colleen Mondor With a welcome mixture of facts and humor, Fran Hawthorne highlights the dilemmas of living an environmentally virtuous, healthy life in a fiercely consumption-oriented culture.—Michael F. Jacobson, PhD, executive director, Center for Science in the Public Interest "People are quickly learning that living a simple, low-impact life actually isn't so simple. Thankfully, there's much-needed relief to be found in Fran Hawthorne's funny, poignant, and often eye-opening way of sorting through the dilemmas-and solutions—facing socially and environmentally minded consumers."—Greg Melville, author of Greasy Rider: Two Dudes, One Fry-Oil-Powered Car, and a Cross-Country Search for a Greener Future About the Author Award-winning journalist Fran Hawthorne has been a writer or editor at Fortune, BusinessWeek, Institutional Investor, and other publications. She is the author of three books on health care and investing, including Inside the FDA and Pension Dumping. She lives with her family in New York City.