
WHATEVAS



Fight the power.

IMAGE: FREE STORE KAILUA

Out of pocket

BY MATTHEW DEKNEEF | DEC 15, 2010

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FREE STORE / In 2003, artists Gaye Chan and Nandita Sharma started “selling” plant cuttings from their garden at the **Free Store**, a companion venture to their guerilla gardening/global commons project, Eating in Public—an ongoing experiment that refuses to acknowledge the state’s authority over public and private lands.

Today, Free Store is a fixture in its Kailua neighborhood with an inventory that’s grown beyond seedlings and potted plants to include office furniture, unwanted Christmas toys or even cold hard cash. All priced at free.

“It’s really to demonstrate that we don’t need to rely on the capitalist state,” says Sharma of the project’s core mission. It’s a timely reminder during the holiday season when shopping and the retail machine is at its most heightened. “We can live a life in common with one another and that it’s possible.”

It’s also given root to others who have opened shops around the island—the most popular being at the University of Hawaii at Manoa Art Building. The unregulated take-and-leave system and community participation is vital to its success. Chan and Sharma may have started it, but no longer consider themselves involved with either store.

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Free Ninety-nine

“We want to be really clear that we’re not operating a charity here,” Sharma clarifies. “[The Free Store] operates on a sense of justice. Its success is when we’re not needed anymore, when they function on a system that works for the people that create them.”

Free Store Kailua, 437 Keolu Dr.; Free Store UH Art Building, 2444 Dole St., Learn how to open your own Free Store at [nomoola.com]