



Crime & Punishment

James Alan Fox on criminal behavior and the justice system

Notsocool.com

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The closing of Burlington Mall when an umbrella was mistaken for a gun was a clear case of better safe than sorry. Whatever the details of the umbrella and the intent of its owner, the episode raises important questions about commercial products that are designed to masquerade as dangerous weapons.

Here is the text of an advertisement from the website coolthings.com for a gun-like umbrella:

Those samurai sword umbrellas you've probably seen around are neat. But if you're more of a musket man than a bushido warrior yourself, this Rifle Umbrella should be more up your alley.

Styled to look like a real shoulder rifle, the rainy day gear has a realistic-looking rifle butt for the handle and a gun barrel with a sight at the top. That way, you can look like you're carrying a real gun when you have it folded up -- perfect for attracting police attention while you're walking in the streets.

There is a limit to free enterprise...or at least there should be.

Author's note: A few people have asked for the specifics on the ad. Although I hesitated on giving it an unwanted plug, in the spirit of full disclosure, here it is:

<http://www.coolthings.com/rifle-umbrella/>

Also, I am not suggesting that the ad is for the same umbrella as the one involved in the Burlington Mall closing. But the outcome should give pause to anyone who would purchase such an item.

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