

Stop and Pick Up the Trash

My wife and I swim six mornings a week, year round, winter or summer, hot or cold, on a lovely beach in Nassau. We swim in spite of the temperature or condition of the sea. It is invigorating, refreshing, and it stimulates the immune system. Unfortunately, the beach is not always free of trash. We have made it our civic duty, as loyal citizens of The Bahamas, to pick up the trash each morning before we swim. We pick up condom wraps, fast food containers, clothing, bath towels, swim suits, bras, panties, sanitary pads, children's toys, tissue paper, pizza boxes, shoes, beer bottles, soda cans, soft drink containers, etc. Sometimes we find dollar bills, cell phones, and wallets. It is clear to me that during the nights the beach is used as an excitement sandy strip for midnight pleasure seekers.

With all that excitement why can't these busy night goers and fun seekers avoid leaving the trash on the ground? Is it that what they are doing leave them so giddy headed and drunk with stupidity that they have no care for their surroundings? Why can't they pick up their trash and place it in the nearby receptacles or take the trash at home in their own bags? It has been four years since my wife and I have been picking up trash on this beach. When we first started picking up trash four years ago, the amount of trash we picked up each morning was equivalent to the size of one to two thirty-three-gallon trash bags. Today, the amount is about two small plastic grocery bags. Yes, we have seen improvement, but there is still room for improvement. We have noticed that many beach goers are placing their trash in the right receptacles. However, far too many just come to enjoy the beach but allow the trash to drop from their hands to the ground like droplets of sweat and salt water. What a shame!

ATM TRASH CLEANER

Why is it difficult for people to avoid leaving trash around? Why is it difficult for people to pick up trash when they see it, even if they did not put it there? Sometimes the trash on the ground might blow from a far distance or accidentally fall from someone. I can also call myself a bank trash-picker-upper. That is most times when I go to an ATM machine at a bank, there is trash on the floor in front of the machine. I really cannot understand how decent, loyal citizens of our country can stand on a floor filled with simple slips of paper, perhaps accumulated over hours, and not pick them up and place them in the receptacle provided. In fact if each one picked up his/her own slip of paper, we would have no trash on the floor. So with my intolerable attitude toward trash at the entrance of banks, I first turn to the trash and pick it up while sophisticated, well dress managers, secretaries, teachers, doctors, pass by and do nothing. They would continue to the line and just stand and watch me. I would pick up the trash while dressed in my casual attire or in my most formal suit. It does not matter. Why? Because it is my view that if I am at this bank with trash on the floor it is a reflection of me. I feel so uncomfortable standing on a bank line when papers are under my feet or at the entrance of the bank or a store as I just walked through.

CULTIVATED NASTINESS

There are messages I am getting from people who refuse to pick up trash in their surroundings. The messages are: "I am too good to bend down to pick up trash." "That is not my job. That is the job of the cleaners or lower class people." "I did not put that there so why should I pick it up?"

It is my view that people dressed in sophisticated clothing and who live in middle to upper class communities but refuse to pick up trash at entrances of banks or on floors as they walk around in business, are just as bad as the people they look down upon in poor communities who leave mounds of trash in front of their properties. The only difference is the size of the mound. They are both nasty. In other words we have **cultivated** nastiness and **uncultivated** nastiness. They are both nasty.

Several years ago, my family traveled to Toronto, Canada for vacation. We were amazed to see the attitude of people walking the streets (blacks and whites) when they saw a piece of paper on the ground. We noticed that if someone saw that the person walking in front accidentally dropped a chewing gum paper, paper bag, or anything, the one behind, stopped, reached down and picked it up and placed it in the nearest trash bin. Therefore, you would see no trash on the ground in the city. It is clean. Everyone takes responsibility for keeping the city clean. Why can't we have the same kind of mindset and behavior in our country?

LET'S BEGIN TODAY

Dear readers, join my wife and I as loyal citizens of this country who are neither afraid nor embarrassed to pick up trash and do not drop trash just anywhere. Here are a few things to do from "WikiHow".

"1) Stop littering yourself. You have no entitlement to litter. The reason there is so much trash around is because many other people thought the same way. Just be on the lookout for trash bins, and be willing to hold on to your trash for a little while. When on the road, make sure items in the back of your truck are secure and nothing can blow out. Keep your truck bed clean and free of loose litter. If you own a business, keep your parking lot and the area around your dumpsters clean. Have trash containers available for customers. Keep them emptied so trash will not blow out of the containers. On windy days, litter can travel a long way from the litter source. 2) Spread the word to friends and relatives about why littering is so bad. Don't hand out fliers because those could become litter themselves! Create awareness by writing letters to the editors of newspapers. Talk "Trash" and emphasize how litter mars the beauty of the cities and countryside. Encourage citizens to work together and clean up the environment. 3) Start cleaning up. This can be done solo, with friends or in an organized group. Once you get started, you will not want to quit. Getting started is the hardest part. Don't be embarrassed to do it alone. Believe me, it will make you feel really good about yourself. Pick up litter while getting your walking exercise. A lot of people think picking up litter is disgusting and degrading. Litter is what is disgusting and degrading. If everyone would do a little to keep the environment clean, it would make a world of difference. Bring a plastic bag with you on trips, outings and walks. 4) If solo: You can pick up litter on the way to work or school if you don't drive. You may feel embarrassed if this is uncommon in your area. But you will eventually inspire others. You could occasionally take different routes for variety and to see if your actions have taken root with others. Start a community project for picking up trash."

Before you swim this holiday weekend, pick up the trash you meet on the beach. Then do not leave any trash on the beach. Do not just stuff the trash in an overfilled bin and leave thinking you have done your part. Take it with you and dump it at home or in another bin. When we become proud in picking up trash, we will soon become proud that we do not have trash to pick up anymore.

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