

How Nasty Can We Get?

Last week my wife and I were reorganizing our attic and realized we needed to get rid of many unused items. Since our very own trash bins were already filled and these were not the everyday trash, I decided to take these large items to the city dump on Tonique Williams Darling Highway. As I entered through the large gate off the main road, I was shocked to see the debris scattered all about the place. It was so embarrassing to be welcomed that way! Right near the entrance, I saw people picking through the debris looking for items they could use. "Why would people dump trash right here?" I asked myself. Who is doing this and why is it being done? Is it because people are lazy? Is it because they don't care how it looks? I wondered whether I was entering a "fifth world country"—a new category of countries I had to coin for such uncommon nastiness. It appears that people are too lazy to drive the long road to the official dump site. But I was in for a bigger surprise.

I began my journey up the more than a mile long road to the actual dump entrance. I was embarrassingly amazed of the trash that littered the road the entire way. I have taken trash to the dump before over the past forty years and I have never seen this. Almost every minute I commented to myself: "Why are people so nasty?" There were refrigerators, mattresses, bags of clothing, lumber, furniture, food, air conditioners, old computers, paint cans, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. The journey that day turned out to be the longest mile ever. This long road is not even the dump site yet. I know that the managers of the site did not put the trash there; and they are not even responsible for moving it.

So why do people do such things. Is it a sign of mental illness? It is a sign of revenge or bitterness? I wonder what would these same indiscriminate trash dumpers do if I went to their homes and dumped decaying dead dogs, stink food, and old clothing right on their front door steps. What will they think or do?

Is this street to the city dump or landfill a sign of our national pride? Is it a real sign of our national disgust and pain? Is it indifference or simply lackadaisical attitude? Whatever it is, it is totally wrong. In June of 2014, I wrote an article entitled: "Stop and Pick Up the Trash." I was complaining about our beaches. I shared that when Annick and I go to swim, we pick up beach trash and put it in the containers. I said: "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."

We do have some clean, lovely areas on our island. However, any empty street or property is often used as a dumping ground. Why? I think this is done because people simply don't care and do not think clearly about the consequences of what they are doing. People in trash-filled neighborhoods do not realize that the large mound of trash in their neighborhood actually reflects their character and mindset. They leave home for work on Monday morning heavily

perfumed and dressed up in their beautiful apparels and actually step around or over the trash. Is this a sign of mental illness? One writer said: “People litter because they do not feel responsible for public areas like streets and parks. The more they litter, the more it becomes a habit. People usually litter outside their own neighborhood where their trash becomes someone else's problem. People litter because they believe someone will pick up after them. Once litter starts to pile up, people feel even less responsible for adding to the litter. If an area is clean, people are less likely to litter.”

Who is littering? One research states: “Individuals under 30 are more likely to litter than those who are older. In fact, age, and not gender, is a significant predictor of littering behavior.” I wonder if this is the same in our country. Is a sense of entitlement causing many to do this? Is it because too many do not have a sense of ownership? They are saying to themselves: “This land is not my land.” All are guilty of such a despicable behavior: the rich and poor, blacks and whites, males and females, young and old. I have seen people dumping from their luxurious cars and expensive trucks. Let’s stop this.

THIS MUST STOP

Dear citizens, we must stop this indiscriminate dumping. It looks terrible. It is detrimental to the image we project to the world. It ruins our tourism brand and product. It pollutes the environment and even impacts adversely our mental health. It shows who we are as a people. Stand up and make a difference. Drive the entire road to the landfill, pay the fee, and dump the trash. Let us truly display national pride. Make it your duty to stop and pick up trash wherever you are—the small pieces of chewing gum wrappers on the school floor, sandwich papers, ATM print-outs, etc. Let it begin with you. Simply make an intentional, deliberate decision. “I will not litter.” “I will not do indiscriminate dumping anywhere, anytime, anyhow.

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