

# TESTIFY

— A TRUE STORY —



*Welcome.*

*We hope you are enjoying your stay.*

*Now is the time to sit back,  
relax and reflect.*

*We are pleased to provide this true story.*

*Perhaps after reading this piece  
you will want to pick up a pen  
and write your own personal story.*

*A story that shaped and embraced you.*

*Possibly, you'll want to share it with others.*

*An invitation to submit your piece  
for future Testify books is offered.*

*It is not complicated.  
Just write from your heart.*

*Even if you decide not to pick up a pen,  
we trust the story you read in this little book  
will give you a moment of reflection.*

*Enjoy.*

**tes·ti|fy** (tes'tē fī) 1) to make a declaration to substantiate a fact; to bear witness or give evidence, esp. under oath; 2) to bear witness to; affirm; declare or proclaim publicly; 3) to serve as evidence

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— BACKYARDS —

**T**HE RECENT OUTRAGE OVER

INFERIOR PRODUCTS INFILTRATING U.S. MARKETS IS JUSTIFIED. Yet from where I stand it is also laughable. A country that deliberately throws its garbage all over the world should not be shocked when the trash cans come hurling back.

I am standing on a small island that is part of the U.S. Commonwealth of Puerto Rico. It is where I live. Just one of many places worldwide where the United States deliberately and diligently dumps inferior products.

Last month it was a brand of tire inflator. Every can spewed foam on our hands instead of in our tires. On a remote, rocky, thorn-infested island a tire inflator is not a purchase made solely by the over prepared. It is a necessary part of our daily survival kit. You don't leave home without it.

When many U.S. manufacturers realize they have produced a run of bad product, they don't destroy it. They ship it and sell it at a premium outside U.S. borders. Commonwealths and territories are fair game, and so is the rest of the world.

They dump it.

On me. And people like me.

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In the years I have lived here I have purchased defective household goods, appliances, electronics, and car parts. I am not alone. Two thousand people live on this island and we have all fallen victim. Time and time again the latest wave of junk to blow through is a standard topic of conversation.

How deliberate is this dumping?

A couple of years back the island was awash in flat soda. Unaware, we all bought it and then poured it down our sinks. A week later we sat watching U.S. television, complements of satellite TV, and cursed as the new "Freshness Dated," soda campaigns rolled out. We helped ourselves to the harder stuff. On the rocks. It wasn't the price of a liter of soda that angered us. It was the kick in the face.

What precedent entitles U.S. manufacturers to dump inferior products outside the continental United States?

A few years back a tanker ran aground off our shores. Oil seeped. The community rallied. My husband and I volunteered to spend our afternoons cleaning up a stretch of shoreline.

We were peaceful about it.

We drove cars.

We used oil.

Boats run aground.

One person had erred and it would now take many people to clean up their mess. We would be two of those people.

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The oil was sent for analysis. We went on with our lives.

When the report came back, we were furious.

The oil was from FIVE different tankers.

When news went out that one tanker had gone aground, four others used the opportunity to flush their dirty holds. What precedent entitles major oil companies to get away with that?

When we first arrived on the island we were startled to discover U.S. military tanks abandoned on otherwise pristine beaches. Really, it was, and still is, hard to ignore. We were also informed that the island and outlying cays were riddled with unexploded ordnances. For those of you not familiar with military vernacular, an unexploded ordnance is a bomb that didn't go off the first time, has possibly become unstable, and may well go off if you so much as touch it.

All unexploded ordnances in Puerto Rico were dropped and left by the U.S. government. And not just in Puerto Rico. The U.S. government has left its military trash, large, small, and lethal, around the world.

New to the region, on a flat calm day my husband and I ventured out in our boat to a remote cay. I dove in. The reef and fish were magnificent. I spied a bevy of bombs lying on the ocean floor and backed out. We reset the anchor, carefully, and swam our cooler and lunch to shore. We'd be watchful, but we would not be denied our day.

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As instructed, we informed U.S. Fish and Wildlife of the bombs upon our return. I was asked to re-identify the particular cay we were on. After a pause I got this reply. *"You really shouldn't go ashore there. Word is, the U.S. Government dumped Agent Orange on that cay. Jury's still out on how long it remains toxic."*

Fix-a-flat  
Soda  
Household goods  
Electronics  
Car parts  
Bombs  
Agent Orange

I am a U.S. Citizen just off the edge of your awareness screen and I am getting bombarded out here. Repeatedly.

As you tidy up your backyard and gaze out your kitchen window at your own pristine little corner of the world, take pride in it. You deserve to. But at the same time acknowledge that you are an intricate part of these United States.

You are a voice and a vote in a country that deliberately dumps inferior product around the world.

Before you lash out at another country, remember, the trash can hurl both ways. If you don't want your neighbors' garbage in your own backyard, stop throwing it in theirs.

*Otherwise, duck.*



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BACKYARDS

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as long as you are thoughtful and  
genuine in the telling of your story.*

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