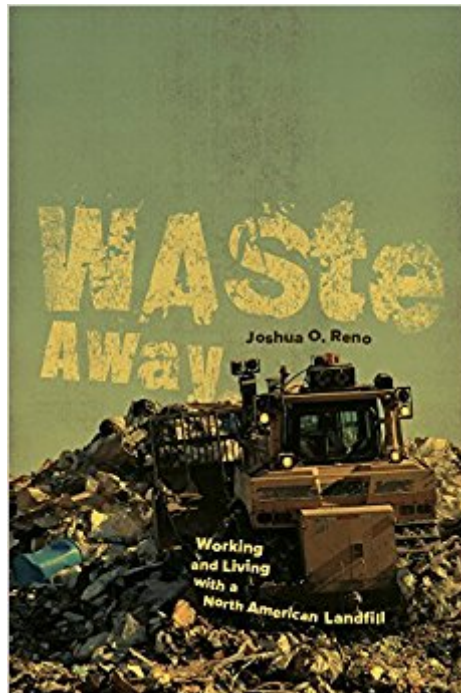




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# Waste Away: Working And Living With A North American Landfill



## Synopsis

Though we are the most wasteful people in the history of the world, very few of us know what becomes of our waste. In *Waste Away*, Joshua O. Reno reveals how North Americans have been shaped by their preferred means of disposal: sanitary landfill. Based on the author's fieldwork as a common laborer at a large, transnational landfill on the outskirts of Detroit, the book argues that waste management helps our possessions and dwellings to last by removing the transient materials they shed and sending them elsewhere. Ethnography conducted with waste workers shows how they conceal and contain other people's wastes, all while negotiating the filth of their occupation, holding on to middle-class aspirations, and occasionally scavenging worthwhile stuff from the trash. *Waste Away* also traces the circumstances that led one community to host two landfills and made Michigan a leading importer of foreign waste. Focusing on local activists opposed to the transnational waste trade with Canada, the book's ethnography analyzes their attempts to politicize the removal of waste out of sight that many take for granted. Documenting these different ways of relating to the management of North American rubbish, *Waste Away* demonstrates how the landfills we create remake us in turn, often behind our backs and beneath our notice.

## Book Information

Paperback: 288 pages

Publisher: University of California Press; Reprint edition (February 9, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0520288947

ISBN-13: 978-0520288942

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.8 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 14.1 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 3 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #58,588 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #8 in Books > Engineering & Transportation > Engineering > Civil & Environmental > Environmental > Waste Management #426 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Anthropology > Cultural

## Customer Reviews

"Waste management in industrial society is designed to be out of sight and out of mind. Joshua O. Reno's vivid account of work on a Michigan landfill illustrates the human consequences of disposal in North America. *Waste Away* is a valuable contribution to our understanding of discards and the people who work with discarded materials." —Carl A. Zimring, Associate Professor

of Sustainability Studies, Pratt Institute "Can waste exhilarate and mortify simultaneously? Can it make you draw closer even while cringing? Joshua O. Reno brings all the dynamism of trashâ "too often denied or disavowedâ "into view. He lucidly shifts waste from an afterthought to a front-and-center cultural artifact that explains us all too well."â "John Hartigan, Professor of Anthropology and Director of the AmÃ©rico Paredes Center for Cultural Studies, University of Texas, Austin

Joshua O. Reno is Assistant Professor of Anthropology at Binghamton University.

Great present for my Granddaughter

I will preface this comment by admitting that I have only read the first chapter of the book. I was intrigued by the questions the author raised about how we view, or rather, don't view, the things we discard in our daily lives. I have never given much thought to what happens to my trash once it's put to the curb, and never really considered how taboo it is to talk about it (as I am now discovering in writing this). I am looking forward to reading the rest of the book.

What could otherwise have been a very informative book, was ruined by the authors style of writing. It reads like a textbook. Example: "When people scavenge from mass-waste streams, they also circumvent the tacit norms of mass consumption, which keep the ideologically purified domains of home and market in dynamic tension." The whole book is written in professor-speak. I am slogging my way through it because in spite of the writing style, it is an interesting topic. I just don't want to have to work so hard to finish a book.

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