

New York trash man tells Americans wake up to garbage

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Rob Greenfield, an environmental activist who is spending a month in New York, has hanging on himself all the trash he's produced in ziplog bags on October 4, 2016 in New York

A man has been strolling around New York for two weeks weighed down with trash. Meet Rob Greenfield, an environmental activist asking America to wake up to its garbage problem.

In [everyday life](#), Greenfield is committed to leading as environmentally sound a life as possible, but for one month he has decided to behave like the average American and generate 4.5 pounds (two kilos) of trash per day.

So he's eating fast food—pizza, hamburgers and fries—and downing sodas—before stuffing the empty packaging, cups and pots into see-through bags strapped to his body for around seven hours a day.

"I'm fully embracing the American way of making trash," he tells AFP with a smile. Except that he's struggling to keep pace.

Instead he expects to accumulate 100 pounds of trash, instead of his target 135 pounds, when his 30-day "Trash Me" project ends on October 19. The project is destined to be made into a documentary.

At first he planned to carry organic waste as well, but he gave up after the stench became overwhelming, wafting out of the bags.

Residents in New York, the largest city in the United States, produce 12,000 tons of waste every day, according to the GrowNYC sustainability organization.

Eighty percent of US products are used once and then thrown away, and the country produces 33 percent of the world's solid waste for just 4.6 percent of the global population, according to the group's website.



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"Everywhere you walk it's 'buy, buy, buy, consume, consume, consume'," says Greenfield. "If you really want to live an environmental conscious life in the United States, you kind of have to go against the grain."

Wherever he goes, he's mobbed by people whipping out their phones to take pictures. Most of those who come up to talk know his work—he's something of a celebrity with his own show on the Discovery channel.

"You're the garbage man?" asks a passer by. "Most people say [trash man](#)," replies the ever jovial Greenfield.

He has travelled the world, and once spent a year living in a tiny house without running water or electricity in San Diego, California.

Greenfield says attitudes are changing in America but mostly toward the need to preserve nature rather than cut back on household waste.

"They're cool with the recycling, with buying more eco friendly products, but not many people want to reduce (consumption)," he said.

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