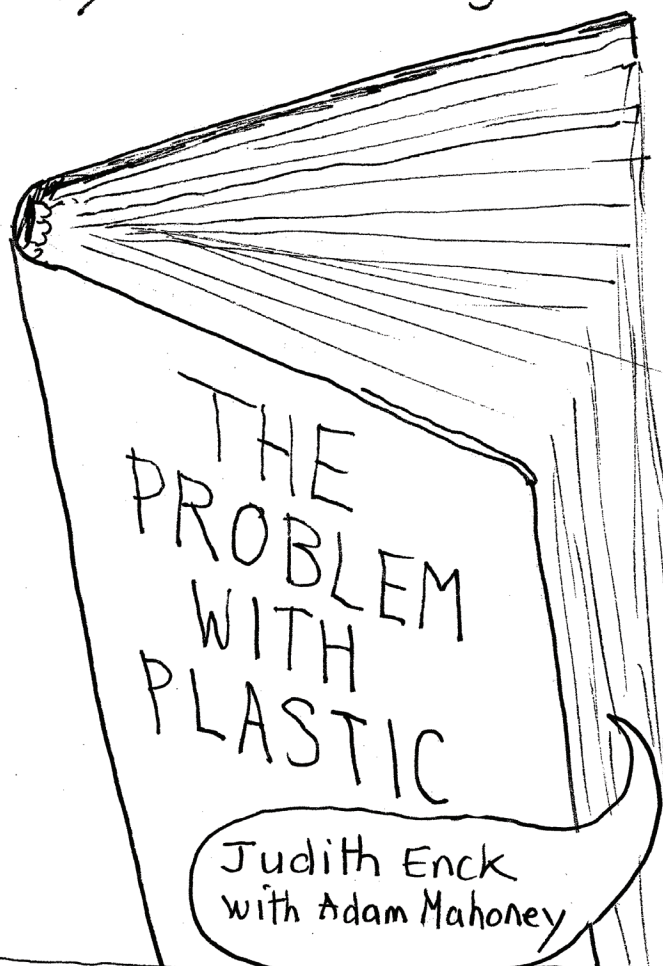


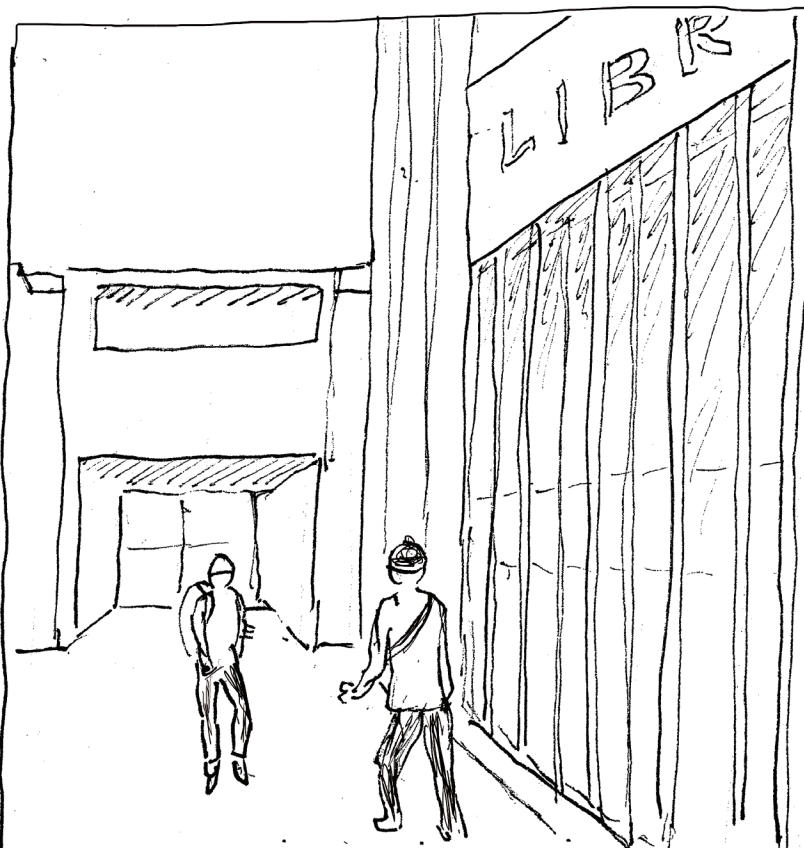
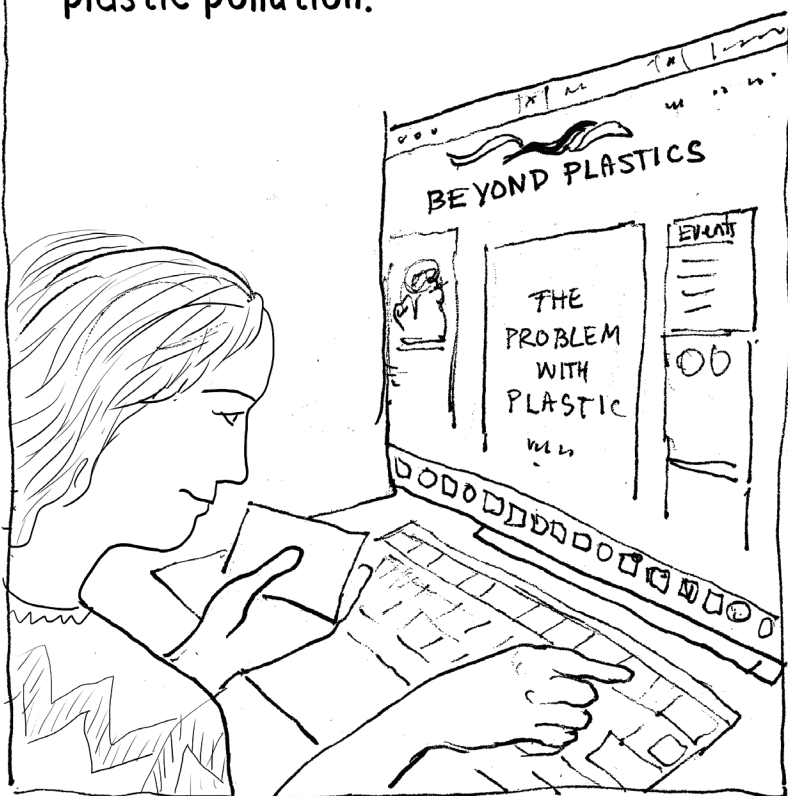
A BOOK REVIEW
by Maria C Fitzgerald



Amidst ICE raids, the imprisonment of children and measles outbreaks, plastic does not seem to be an urgent problem.

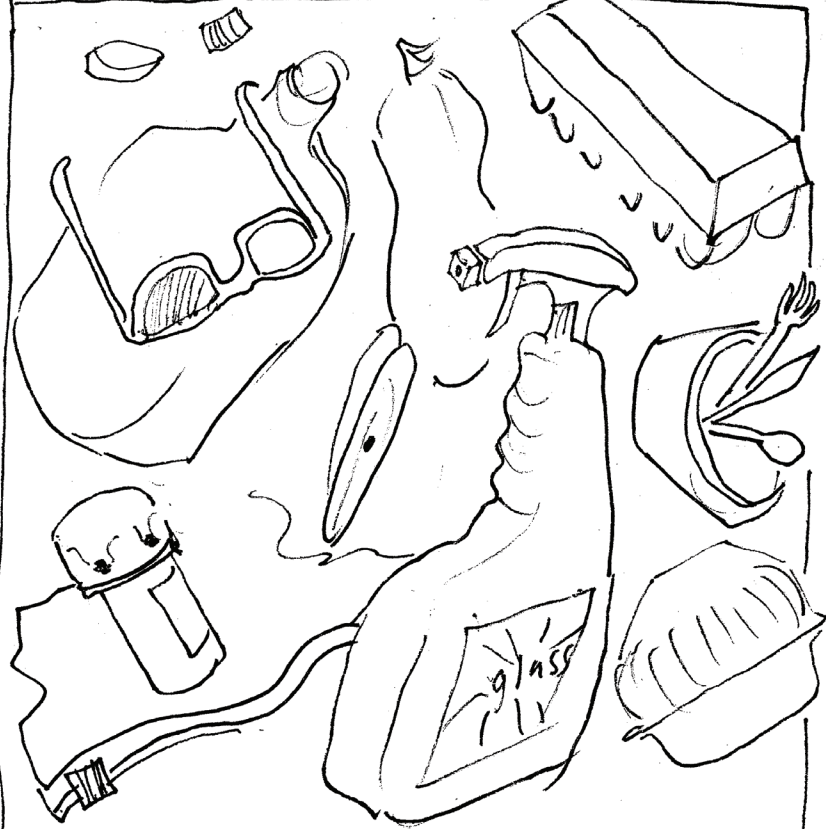
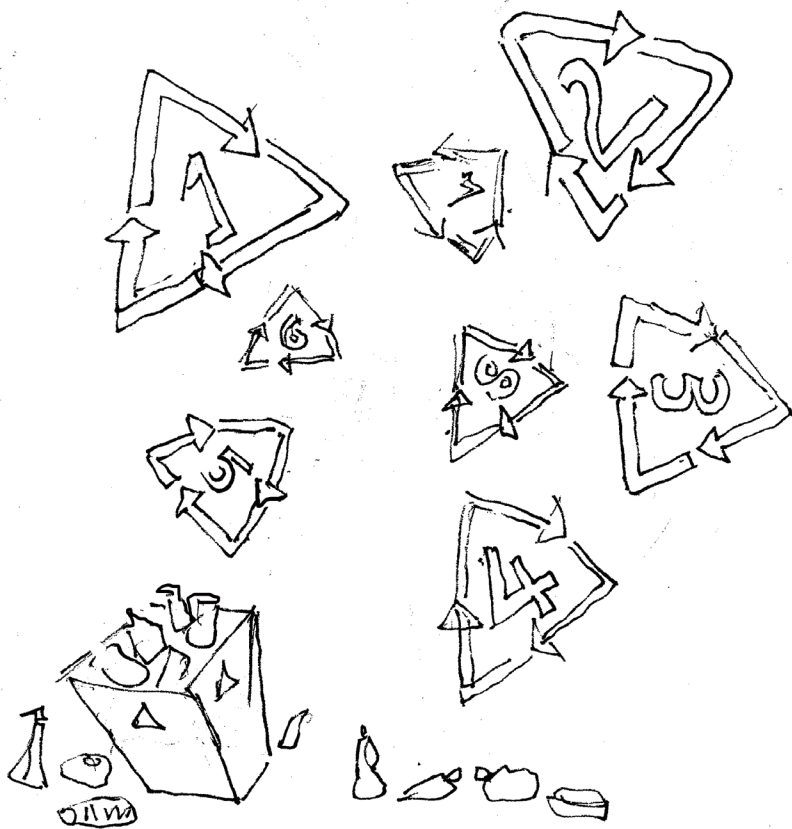


However, I was going to a meeting on artists' perspectives on the plasticocene, so I had an urgent need for new information about plastic pollution.



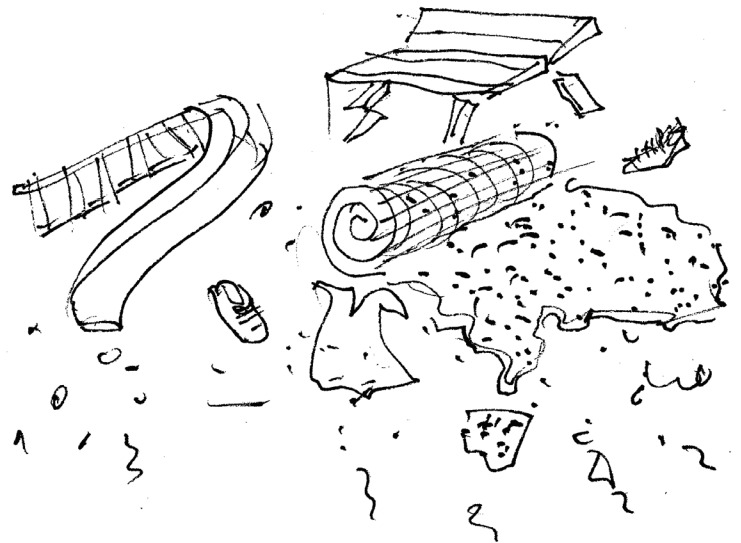
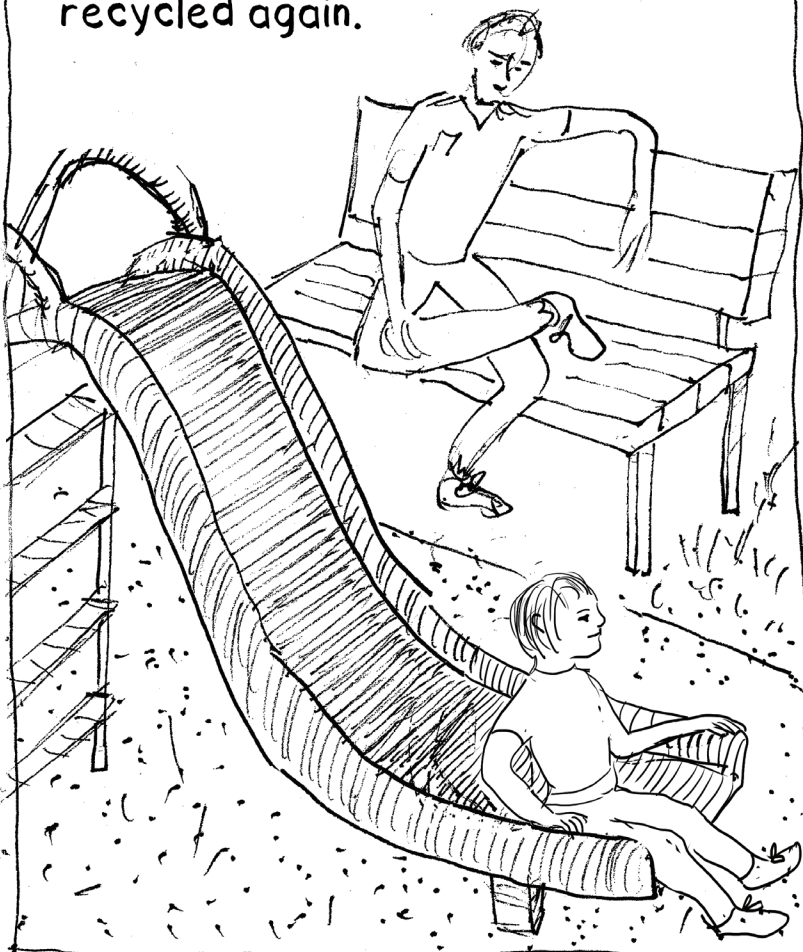
I was delighted when a reserved copy of The Problem with Plastic by Judith Enck and Adam Mahoney arrived at my local library.

Enck and Mahoney explain how the public was misled about how plastic could be recycled.

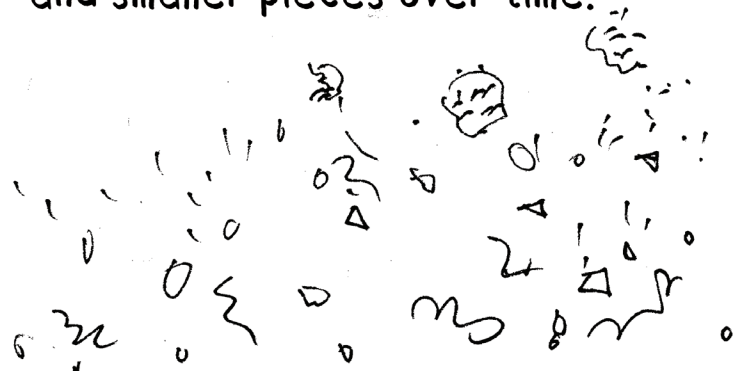


The facilities to sort and recycle all these different types of plastic do not exist.

Furthermore, plastic degrades so a downcycled item cannot be recycled again.



Enck and Mahoney discuss how plastic just breaks into smaller and smaller pieces over time.



These

tiny pieces

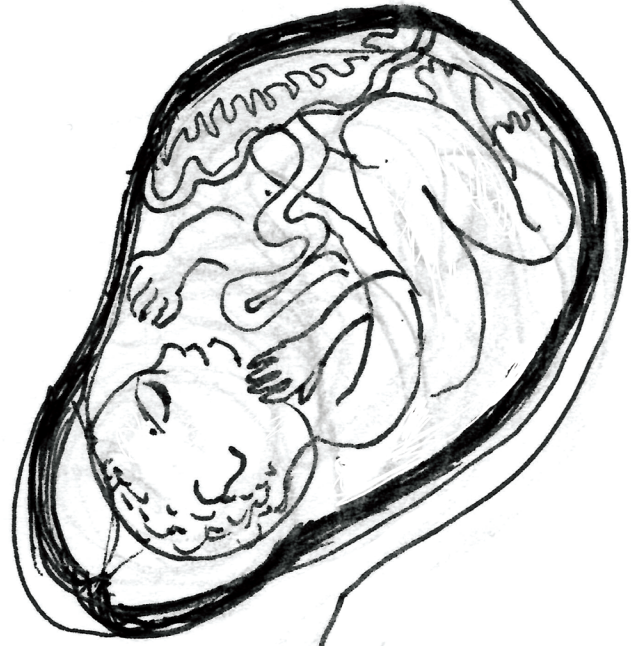
of plastic,

less than five
millimeters across

are called

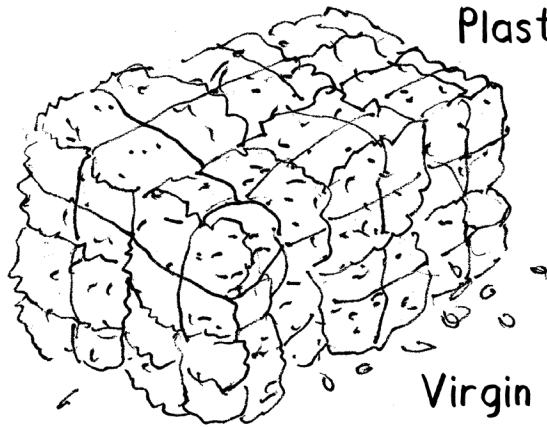
microplastic.

Enck and Mahoney cite studies
where microplastic was found in
the human body.

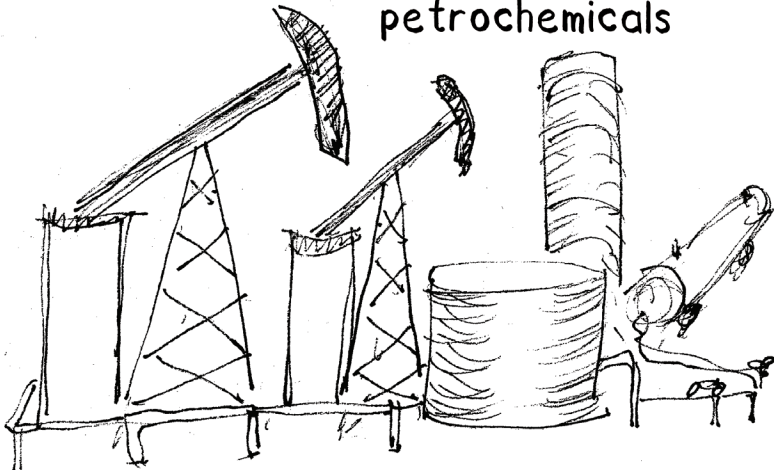


The authors describe the hazards
of "advanced chemical recycling".

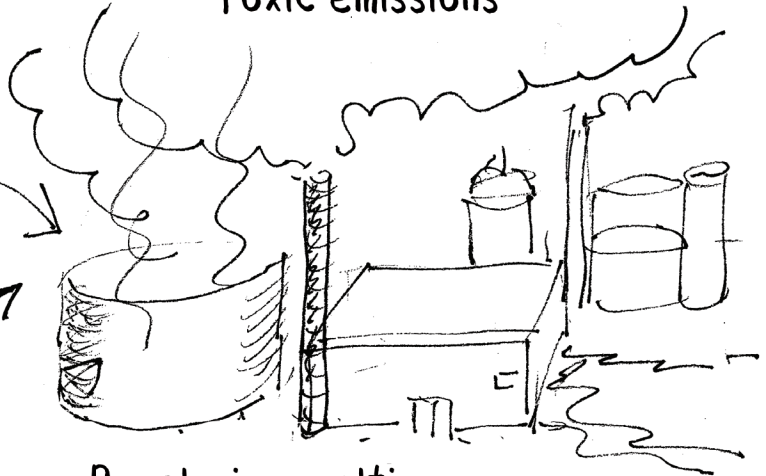
Plastic waste



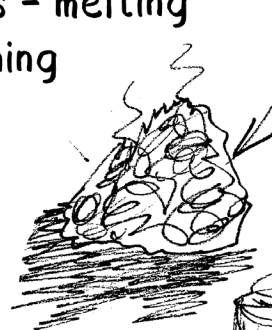
Virgin
petrochemicals



Toxic emissions



Pyrolysis - melting
and burning

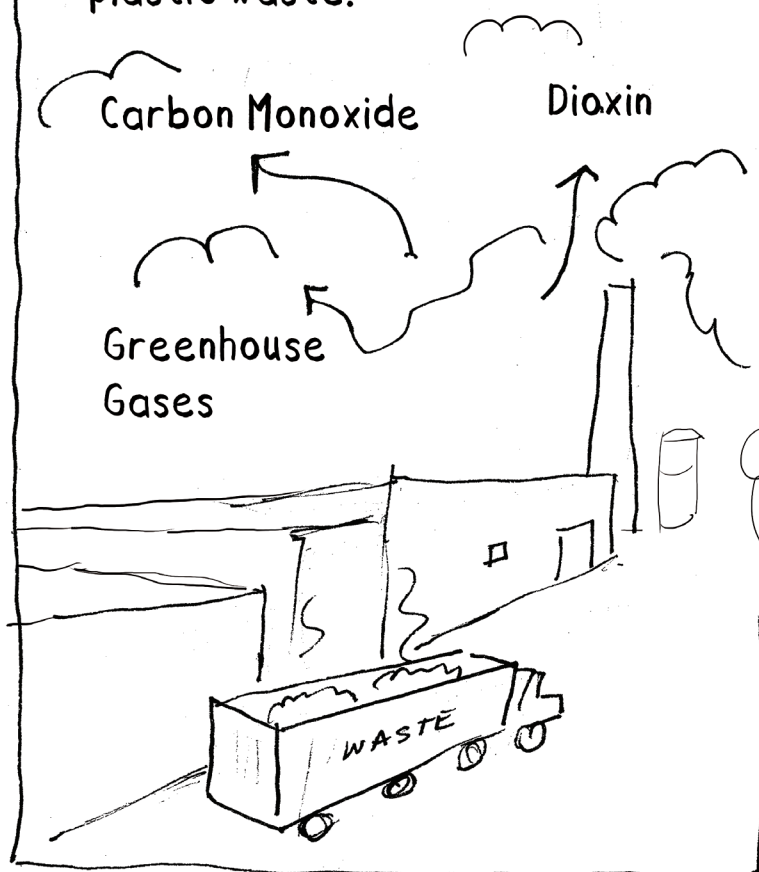


Fuel

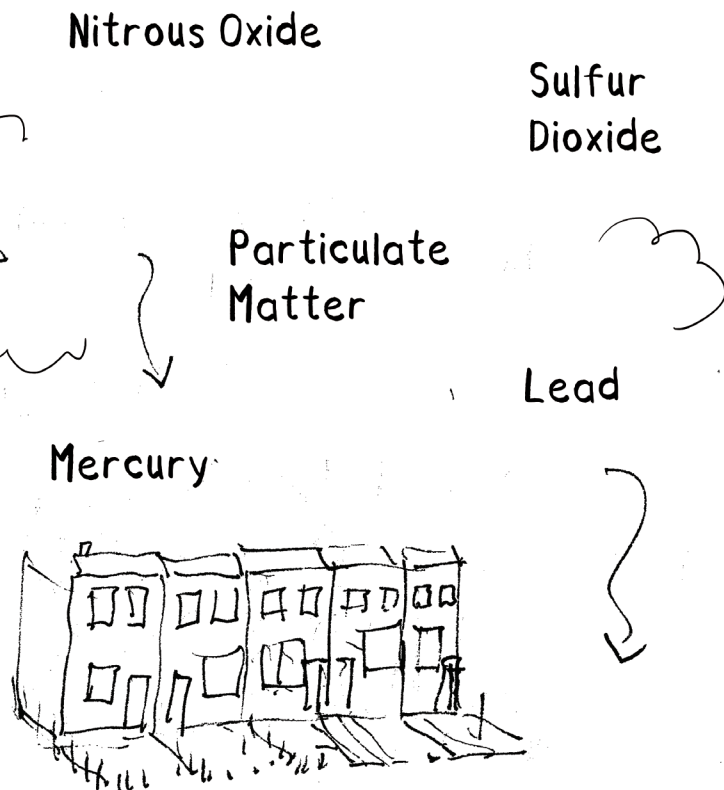


Waste for
land fill.

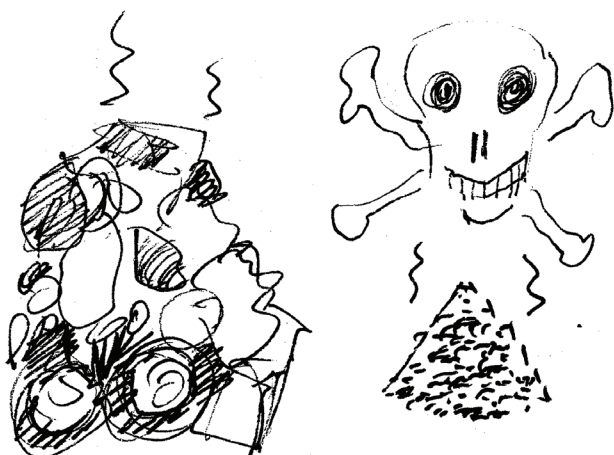
Enck and Mahoney describe the hazards of incinerating plastic waste.



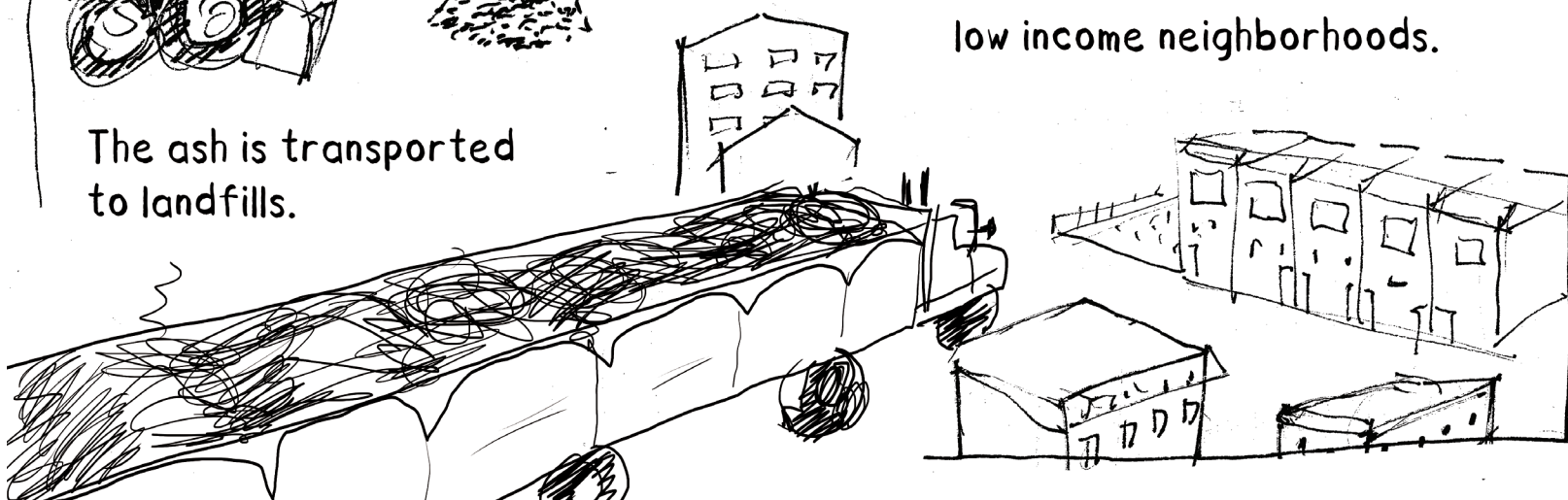
Incinerators, or waste to energy facilities are often located in low income neighborhoods.



From this book, I learned that for every three pounds of waste incinerated, one pound of toxic ash is produced.



The ash is transported to landfills.

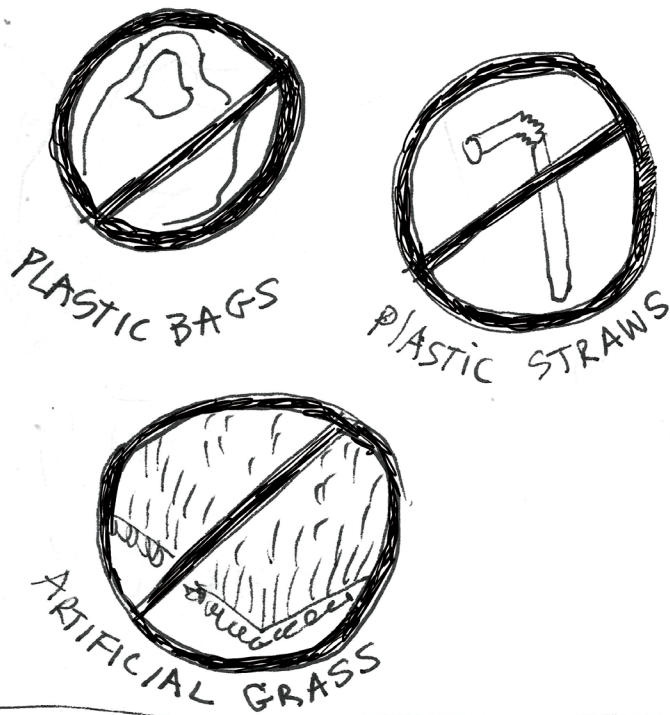


Dust

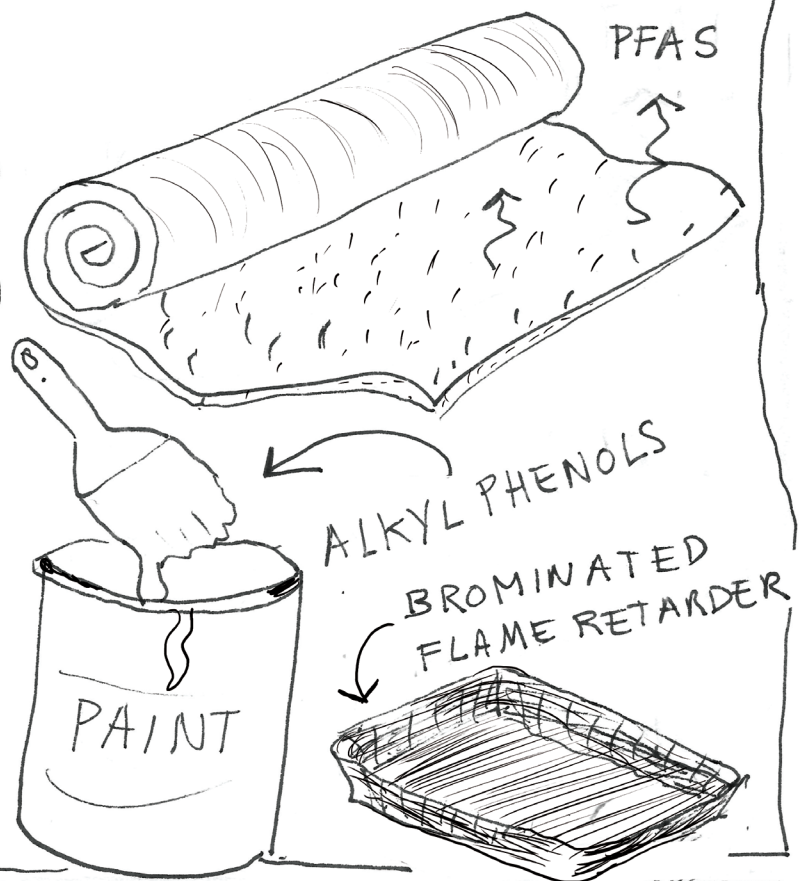
Runoff

Following the pattern of environmental injustice, these landfills are found in low income neighborhoods.

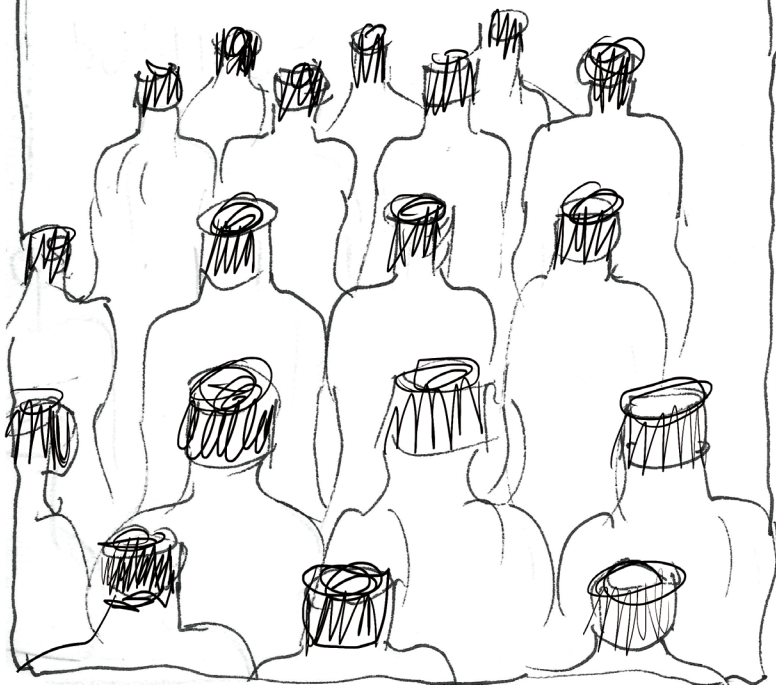
Enck and Mahoney reveal that the real solutions to plastic pollution are laws to ban certain items.



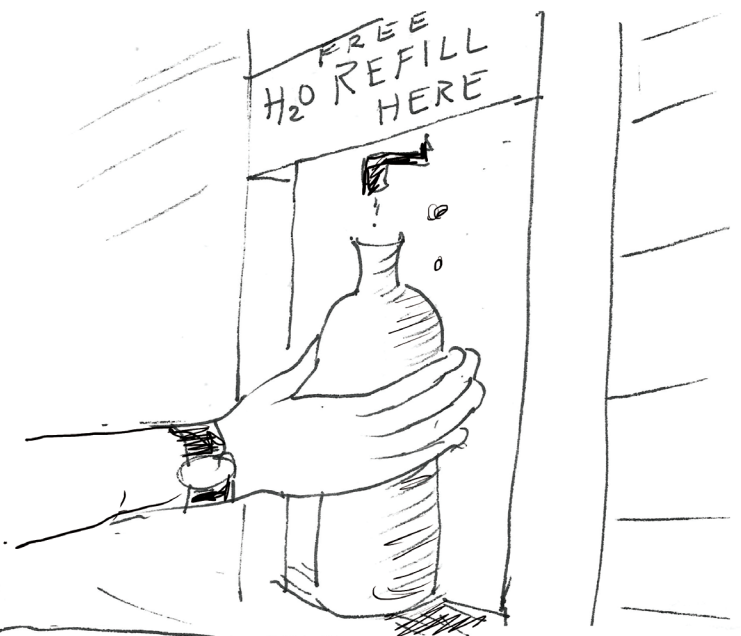
Also, laws to regulate the toxins in plastic are suggested.



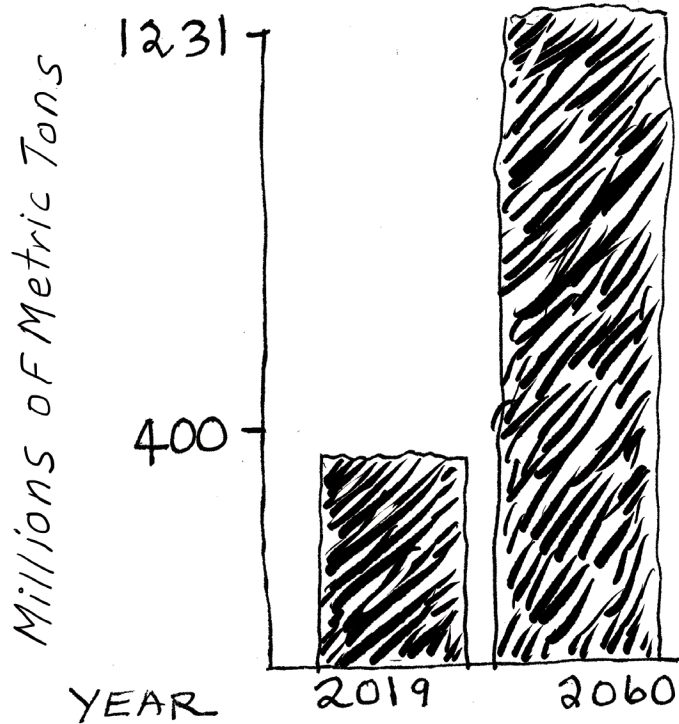
They also recommend extended producer responsibility laws that require plastic producers to manage packaging waste.



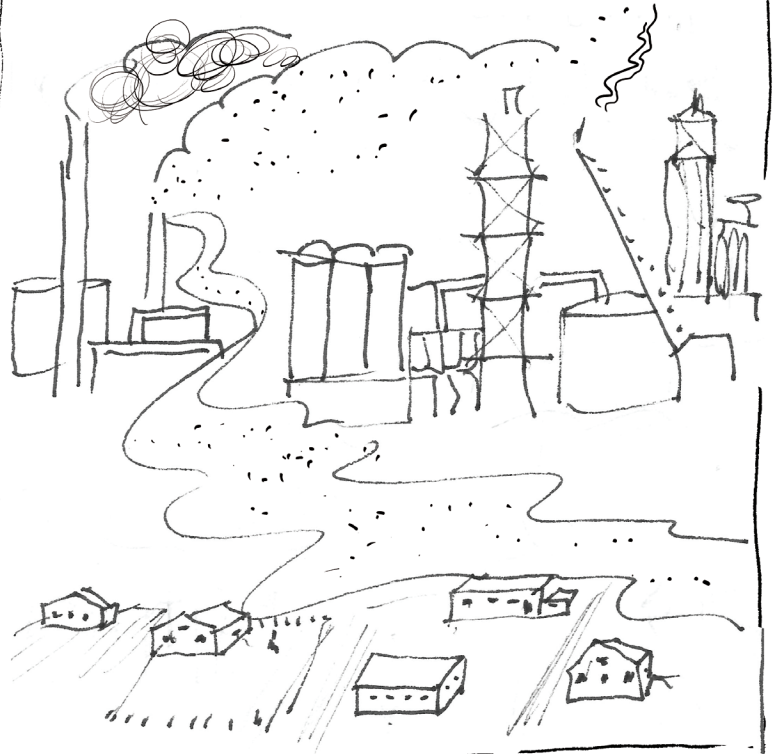
Another helpful solution mentioned is greening government procurement. Both New York and Massachusetts state governments no longer buy bottled water.



From this book, I learned that global production of virgin plastic is predicted to increase



This will be especially harmful for the people who live near the factories that make plastic.



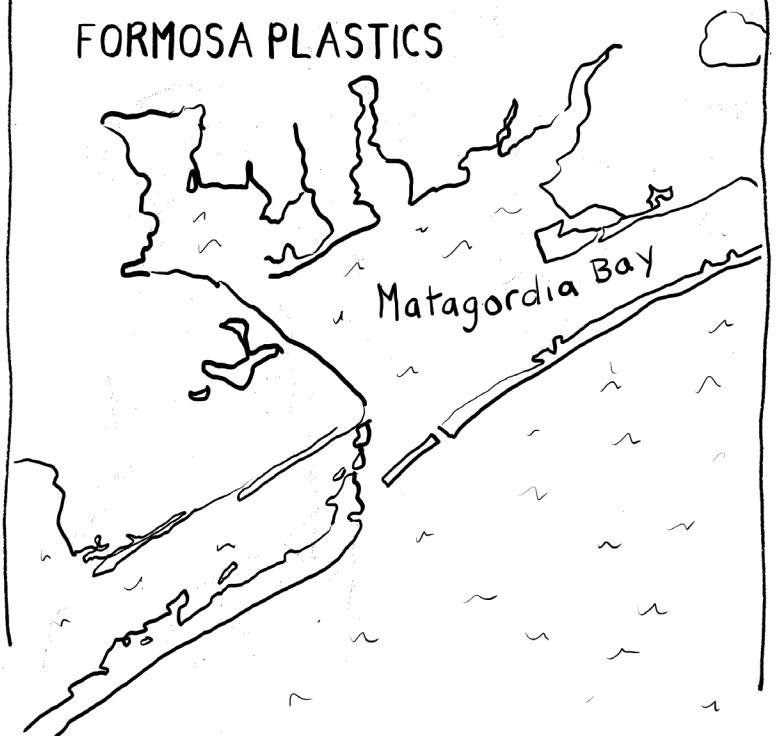
Two such people, who became activists, are described in the chapter entitled...

Cause For Hope



Diane Wilson, a shrimp boat captain is working to protect Matagorda Bay, Texas from petrochemical and plastic pollution.

FORMOSA PLASTICS



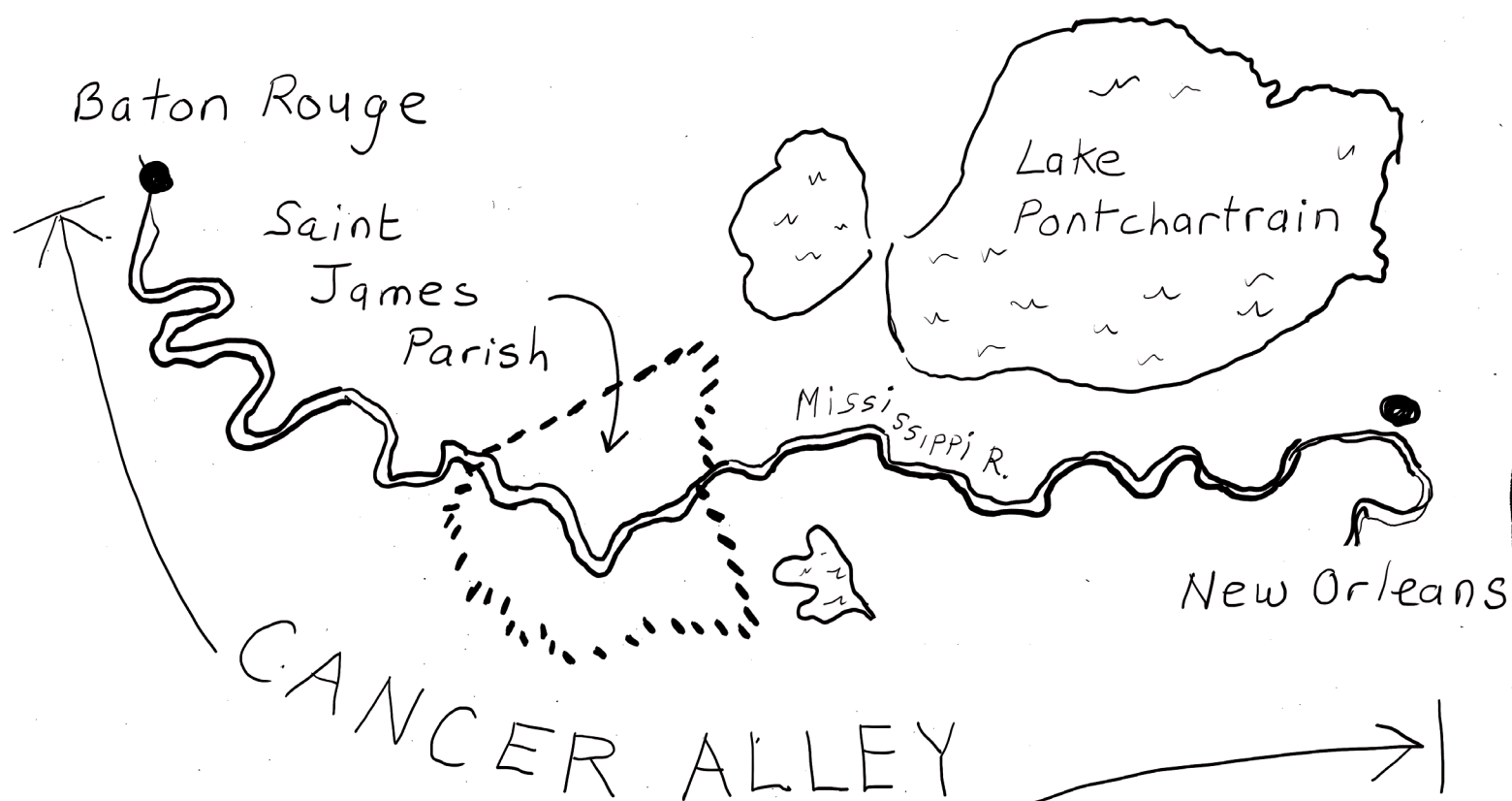
Ms Wilson documented Formosa
Plastics' pollution in the bay
near the factory. She
successfully sued them in 2019



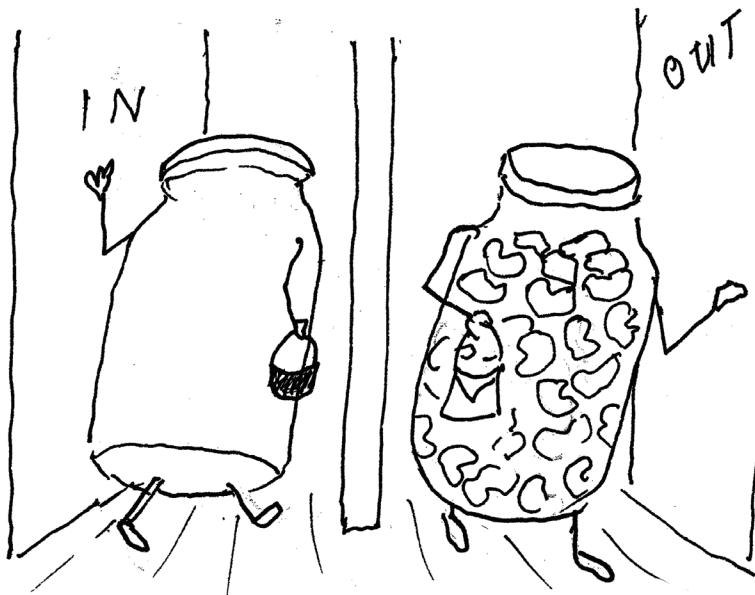
Sharon Lavigne, a former teacher
is the founder of Rise St James.
This group works to preserve the
health and historical roots of
their community.



There are 200 petrochemical plants along the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. Ms Lavigne has been working to stop a new Formosa Plastics plant in St James Parish for many years.



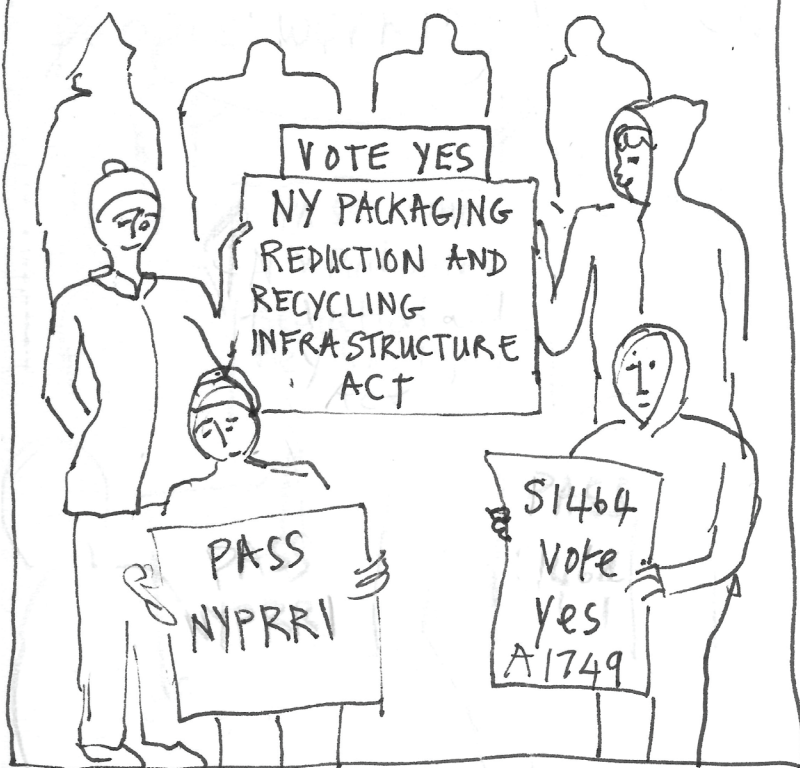
Another chapter describes ways that individuals can reduce their consumption of plastic such as patronizing refillery stores.



People could bring their own containers for their restaurant leftovers.



However, the authors stress that a problem this big can only be solved by people working together.



In keeping with this approach, a team of staffers and volunteers did much of the research for this book.



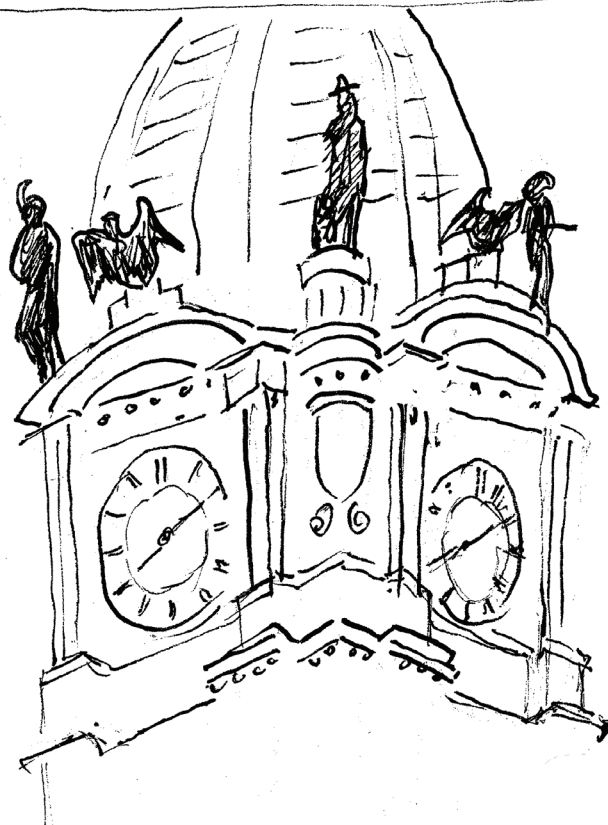
This useful book not only prepared me for my plasticocene meeting, it also prompted me to research plastic problems in my own city.



I learned that Philadelphia city council member Jamie Gauthier has introduced the Stop Trashing our Air Act.



This act will stop Philadelphia from sending its trash, which includes plastic, to Chester for incineration.



Since Philadelphia's waste disposal contracts expire this summer, the city now has the opportunity to make this change.