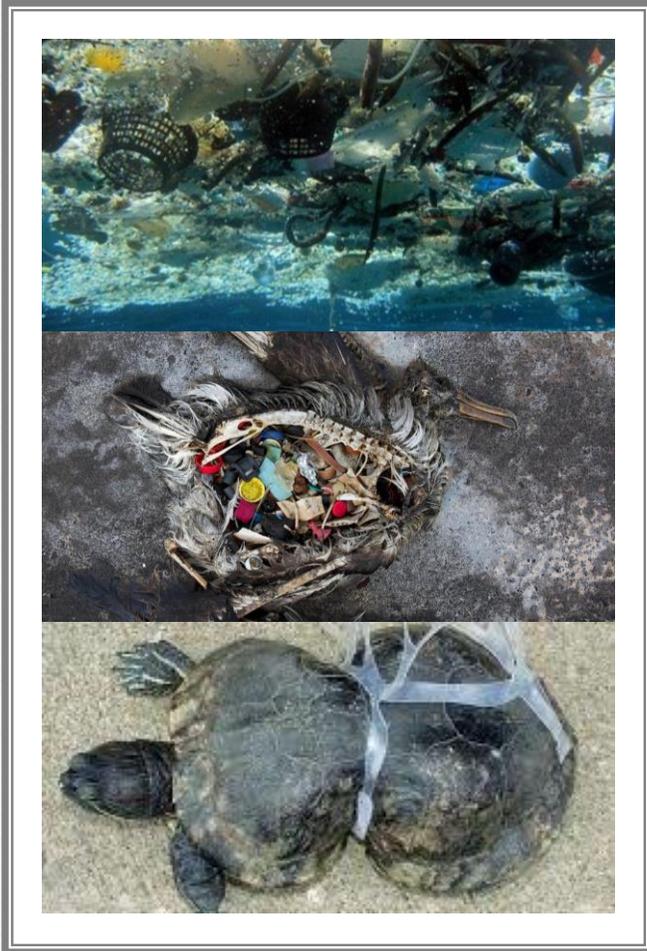


The Impacts of Plastics  
on Impoverished  
Communities



## What we think about when we discuss the harms of plastics?

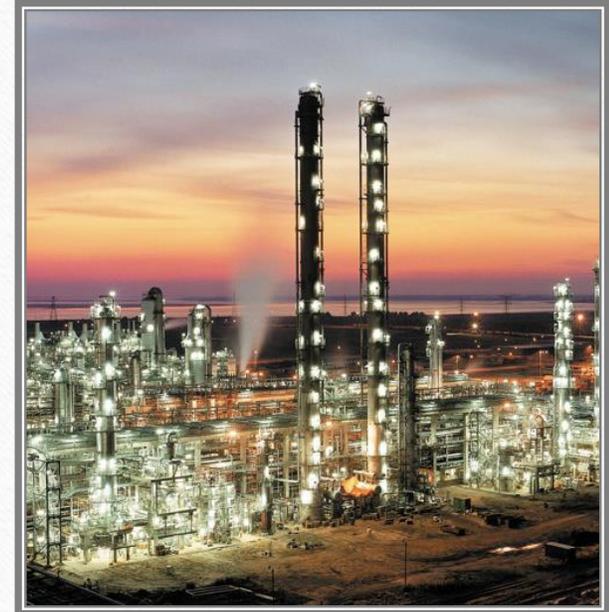
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- Do you think about the harmful impacts on the environment and on other species?
- It is important to realize that plastics hurt people too—especially people who are impoverished

# Production of Plastics

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- We oftentimes don't appreciate the price that poor people pay for us to have disposable products
  - Louisiana has one of the highest death rates from cancer in the U.S.— and it is also tied for the 2<sup>nd</sup> poorest state
    - It is also home to “Cancer Alley” (formerly known as the “petrochemical corridor”)
    - Data from the 2017 Toxic Release Inventory show that Louisiana ranks 4<sup>th</sup> in total releases and 1<sup>st</sup> in highest releases
    - In places like Mossville, Louisiana- where we see one of the country's largest concentrations of manufacturers of vinyl chloride— we see high rates of illness
      - Including, but not limited to, cancer!



# Use of Plastics

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- Low-income people also suffer at the point of use
  - You have limited choice in the products they can purchase and use— you buy the cheapest products- which are often the most dangerous
- Plastics found in common products:
  - PVC (Polyvinyl Chloride)
    - Found in children’s toys, shower curtains, vinyl flooring, some wallpapers, etc.
  - PS (Polystyrene)
    - Found in foam food containers, meat trays, plastic cutlery, etc.
  - PC (Polycarbonate)
    - Found in reusable food containers, some baby bottles, some reusable water bottles, etc.

# Disposal of Plastics

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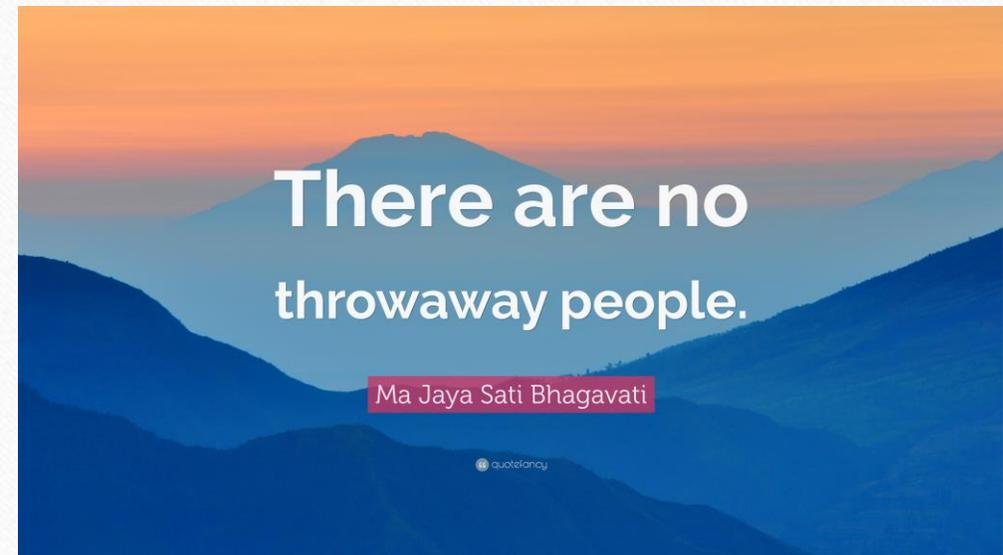
- Oftentimes, we think we are doing a good thing when we recycle our plastics
  - However, in the U.S. less than 10% of our plastics are recycled
    - Most of it is down-cycled or incinerated (mostly in developing nations)
  - Nearly all of the clean air gains that we've made in the U.S. are erased by the large amounts of air pollution from developing nations



# Disposable Products and Disposable People

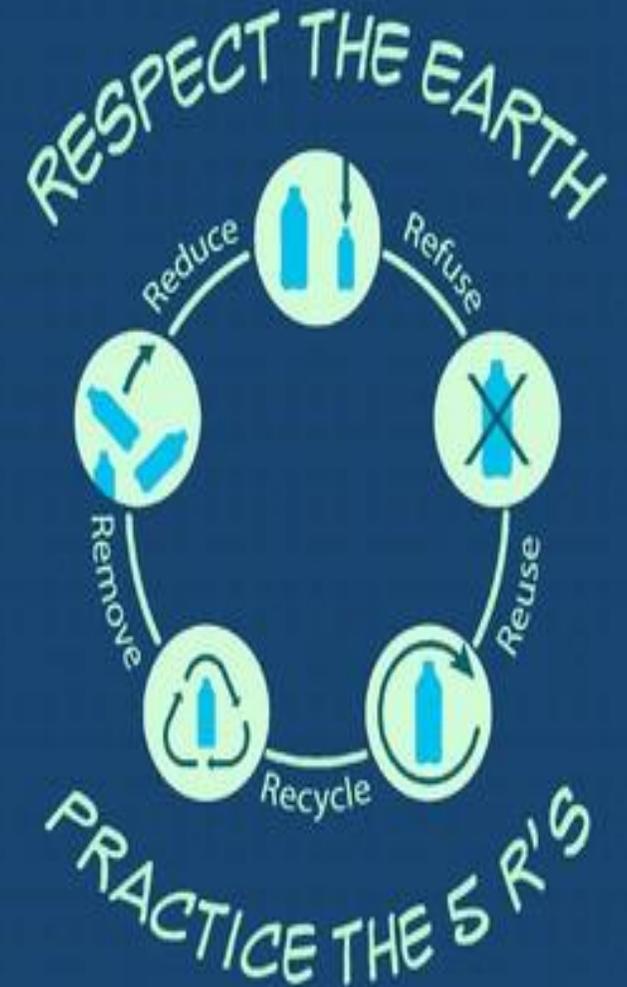
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- The root of the problem, from my perspective, is the idea of disposability itself
  - In order to trash the planet, you have to trash people
- But, we can create a world where we do not do trash either!
  - We can embrace the idea of social justice to come up with creative solutions to get out of the dilemma in which we currently find ourselves!



# What Can I Do To Help?

- Reduce, Refuse, and Remove
  - The Earth Day Network has a “Plastic Pollution Calculator”
  - Ask yourself- Do I need it? Can I use something else? There is oftentimes a non-plastic alternative
  - If you see trash laying around on campus, in your neighborhood, at the park, etc... pick it up and properly dispose of it
- Recycle (because there are times where consuming plastic might be necessary or the only option)
  - To learn more about what items you can recycle, visit [www.cabq.gov/solidwaste/recycling](http://www.cabq.gov/solidwaste/recycling)
  - Take your single-use plastic bags back and recycle them (at Target, Walmart, or Lowes)
- Reuse
  - Carry a refillable bottle (or coffee cup) with you
  - Skip the straw (or invest in reusable straws and carry them with you)
  - Bring a reusable container with you to a restaurant if there might be leftovers
  - Use reusable shopping bags and produce bags
    - And visit your local farmers market
  - Donate old furniture, electronics, clothes and toys
  - Upcycle single-use plastic products into multi-use products (or support artists that do)



Learn more about creating recycled musical instruments at [www.darlamusic.com](http://www.darlamusic.com)

# Stay Informed, Spread the Word, and Get Involved

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- Watch one of the many documentaries about plastic pollution
  - Bag It, Addicted to Plastic, Plasticized, or Garbage Island
- Support national and global organizations addressing plastic pollution
  - Oceanic Society, 5 Gyres, Algalita, Plastic Soup Foundation, Environmental Defense Fund, the Sierra Club, etc.
- Support Environmental Advocacy organizations in New Mexico:
  - Native Plant Society of NM, Nature Conservancy of NM, NM Land Conservancy, New Mexico Wilderness Alliance, Sierra Club- Rio Grande Chapter, Southwest Environmental Center
- Organize or participate in a waterway cleanup
- Support bans on single-use plastics
- Vote for politicians (locally, state-wide, and nationally) with solid environmental voting records and/or encourage your representatives to support environmental initiatives
  - League of Conservation Voters Scorecard
  - You can find information on Environmental Policy in New Mexico by visiting: [https://ballotpedia.org/Environmental\\_policy\\_in\\_New\\_Mexico](https://ballotpedia.org/Environmental_policy_in_New_Mexico)

*We need  
you!*