

Plastic Free: The Inspiring Story of a Global Environmental Movement and Why It Matters

Rebecca Prince-Ruiz

Joanna Atherfold Finn

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Plastic Free is the remarkable story of how a social media post from an isolated corner of Western Australia grew into a global network of 250 million activists.

In 2011, following a visit to a waste sorting facility, Rebecca Prince-Ruiz had an epiphany about the enormity of plastic pollution. That was the impetus for a self-challenge: to have a plastic-free month. The “accidental campaign” has since grown into an influential environmental movement.

Sobering statistics, such as that only 9% of all plastics are ever recycled, come alongside heartbreaking stories about plastic’s lethal effects on wildlife and its ubiquitous, pernicious presence in the water and on land. However, the book focuses more on positive examples of meaningful change. Sidebars and pull quotes from diverse voices offer practical, inspiring solutions, from beach clean-ups to working with restaurants to eliminate single-use straws, bags, and packaging. The ideal is the development of a circular economy, wherein products are redesigned with their ultimate ends accounted for, and where, as in nature, waste is moved out of the system.

The book charts the growth of the Plastic Free movement, analyzing the evolutions of its structure, messages, and actions. From a small clutch of concerned citizens in suburban Perth to the development of the Plastic-Free Foundation, the group has maintained a minimal budget and staff, relying on creative and lateral thinking approaches to tapping into public concern for the environment. They keep communications direct and nonjudgmental, and harness behavioral economics to empower citizens to change their habits in small steps that add up to larger, longer-lasting change.

Rebecca Prince-Ruiz and Joanna Atherfold Finn’s *Plastic Free* challenges everyone to rethink how they consume, waste, and pollute with their shopping choices. Packed with practical suggestions and hopeful encouragements, this book makes it easier to be more mindful about the things we use and reuse.

RACHEL JAGARESKI (January / February 2021)

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