



“As discussed in some circles that “plastic bag fee” would be an economic challenge for “low income” communities, well let me tell you that statement is a fallacy. A fee placed on plastic bags and or paper bags would serve to change people’s behavior, awakening them to environmental consciousness, decrease the ingested plastic leaking pollutants in the water that we drink and bath our bodies.”

## Nurturing grassroots leadership

### Speaking Engagements, Teach-ins, and Workshop Facilitation

Trash Academy members advocate directly for their interests in government, media, educational and other public settings. Three members spoke at two City Council hearings this year, first protesting the toxic and environmentally racist incineration of one third of the city’s collected waste at two incineration plants owned by Covanta in low-income Black communities, and second supporting the amendment to the plastic bag bill that added a fee to discourage single use.

Trash Academy members also facilitated **workshops, led teach-ins**, and spoke at more than **15 other engagements** ranging from the Trash and Environmental Justice, 2023 Villanova Environmental Law Journal Blank Rome LLP Symposium symposium to teacher trainings (such as Understanding STEM Teaching Through Integrated Contexts in Everyday Life (USTRIVE)). We would like to recognize the outstanding leadership and speaking by Trash Academy members **Tea Tynes, Lois Williams, Aminata Sandra Calhoun and by Trash Academy resident artist 22-23 Priscilla Bell Lamberty.**



“The argument that the single-use plastic bag ban and a bag fee are burdensome to communities like mine is extremely insulting and obscures the real burden. My community has been forced to adjust to so much and some of those things are quite unpleasant and unfair such as illegal dumping from outsiders. However, I don’t see that in the ban and bag fee. It’s the one adjustment we should be proud to get behind. It’s not just good for us but the planet at large.”

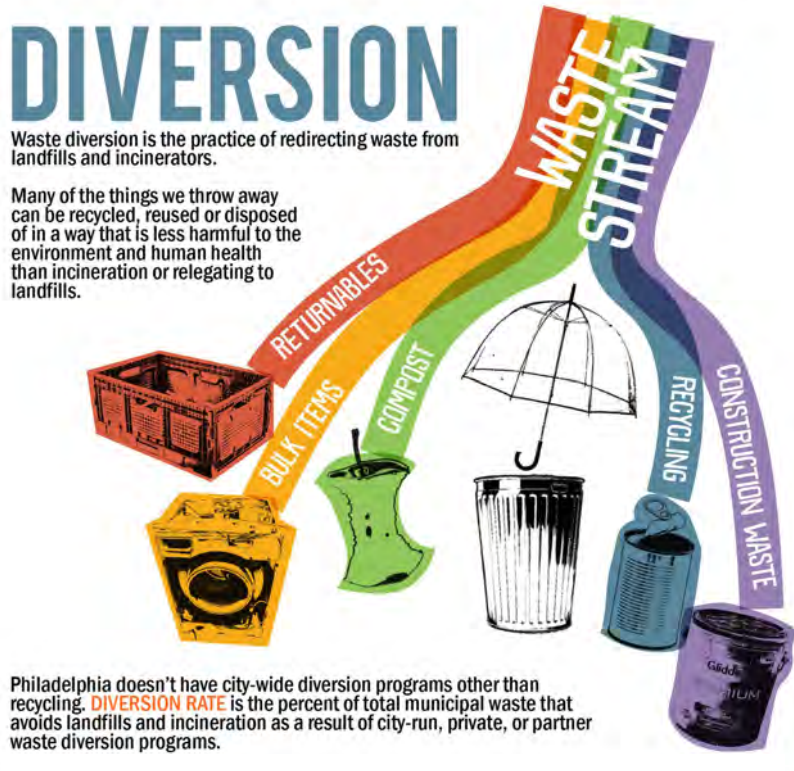
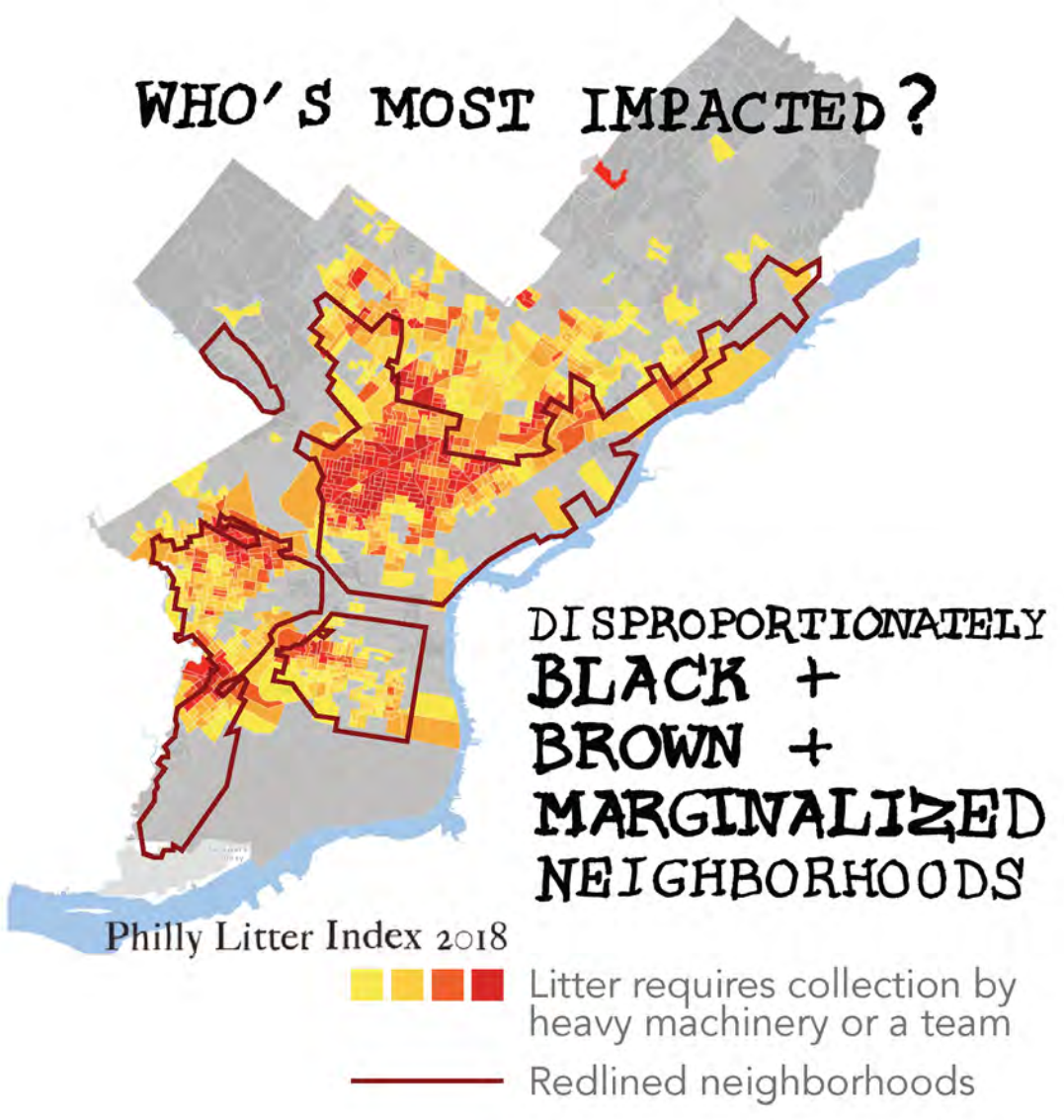
Photos by: Steve Wenik

## Advancing environmental justice

In 2023, Trash Academy launched a new campaign, **Clean Philadelphia NOW**, to end dumping in Philadelphia by 2028. This solutions-oriented agenda was developed during six cross-city collaborative meetings with individuals and groups that are constantly cleaning their neighborhoods. The campaign called on all mayoral candidates to adopt this agenda as part of their platform. To date, over **29 neighborhood groups and organizations** have signed on to support the campaign.

Clean Philadelphia NOW joined with long time partners to form **WASTE FREE PHILLY**. This 5-Point Mayoral Agenda was developed by a coalition working to reduce waste, eliminate litter, end illegal dumping and promote a circular economy. The coalition included Circular Philadelphia, Clean Air Council, Clean Water Action, Plastic Reduction Task Force of Weavers Way Co-op, and Philadelphia Neighborhood Network. The campaign sought to persuade candidates to adopt the policy, and informed voters which candidates committed to taking structural action to the problem.

### WHO’S MOST IMPACTED?

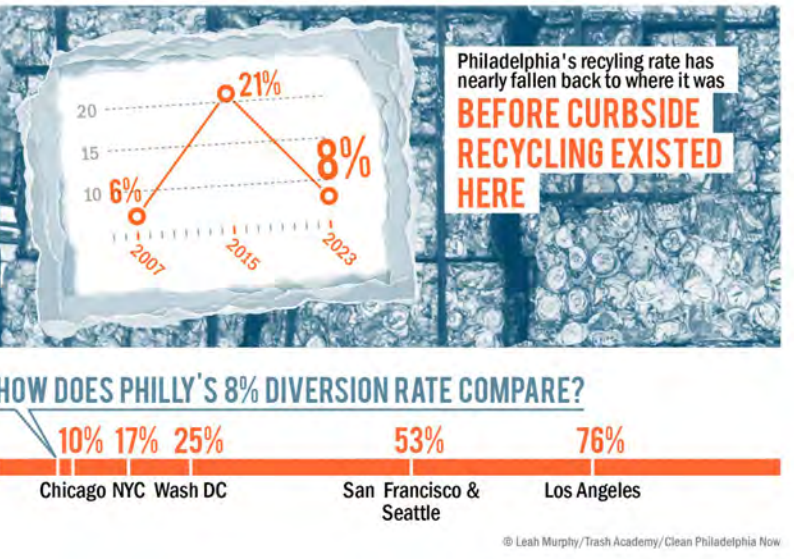


## Expanding education, art & outreach

Trash Academy works with artists and community members to develop creative points of entry, engagement, to ignite change on the issue of dumping in multiple zones of activity. One such highlight is the rousing performance “Die Dumping Die” by the art committee from team Nas at the campaign launch of Clean Philadelphia Now and previously at McPherson Square park attended by 80 neighbors.

In partnership with Circular Philadelphia’s Textile Working Group of 14 organizations, Trash Academy facilitated an Implosion on the topic of blue jeans, undertaking a deep-dive into textile waste and exploring options for greater material diversion and circularity in Philadelphia.

Trash Academy members Tea Tyne and Lois Williams co-taught a Building Environmental Justice in Philadelphia: Participatory Action Research Seminar with Shari Hersh at University of Pennsylvania. Students helped create campaign art and videos featuring first person: <https://www.trashacademy.org/#/campaign-art/>



## Raising media attention to environmental justice issues

Sanitation is a major issue for Philadelphia residents. The launch of Waste Free Philly (and the Clean Philadelphia NOW campaign) **received coverage by 17 news outlets**. A study by the **Lenfest Institute** shows that sanitation is the second biggest issue for Philly residents following crime (mentioned by 70% of respondents, but gets less than 3% of media coverage on average compared to 33% for crime.)

Trash Academy members are often interviewed and quoted, most recently the City Council Testimony covered in metro <https://metrophiladelphia.com/city-council-plastic-bag-ban-paper-fee/>



Photo by: Steve Wenik

## Affecting policy and regulatory change

In 2023, Trash Academy worked with Circular Philadelphia to develop a **one-page flier** outlining the clear steps to open convenience centers to small haulers, which could greatly reduce illegal dumping if enacted.

The Bring Your Own Bag Bill amendment was approved by the City Council on Thursday December 14th, 2023

## Strengthening strategic alliances + Ongoing work for 2024

**DIVERTING TEXTILE WASTE** Trash Academy will continue its collaboration with the Textile Working Group to identify interventions in the fast clothing waste stream. This is an ongoing project that will be ready for public engagement late spring 2024.

**Clean Philadelphia NOW campaign to END DUMPING** We will continue to partner with Clean Water Action, Circular Philadelphia and over 25 neighborhood groups to promote recycling convenience centers for small haulers among other strategies as we work towards ending dumping. We are grateful to the highly active groups among us including the Lawncrest Neighbors and 215 Alliance fighting dumping on Snake Road, Eastwick Friends and Neighbors, Team Nas at Hace, and Impact Services in Harrowgate, to name a few.

**SINGLE USE PLASTICS** Working with Echo Systems and the plastic Implosion to discover the key points of entry into creating reusable food service containers.

Trash Academy is an independent entity with the fiscal sponsorship of CultureTrust.

Online donations can be accepted <https://trashacademy.wedid.it/>



Trash Academy convenes coalitions of community organizations, artists and activists to learn about the waste stream and work together to intervene in the systems that perpetuate it. We pursue environmental justice, and changes in policy and regulations to divert material from incinerators, landfills and illegal neighborhood dumps so as to improve the health and quality of life in specific, highly impacted neighborhoods here in Philadelphia and on the planet at large.

Trash Academy educates its participants, and the public, while nurturing grassroots leadership through teach-ins, workshops, and participatory research (called Implosions). We use games and public art as disarming points of entry to build successful campaigns that reduce and transform the waste stream towards circularity: recycling, repurposing, and reusing discarded materials.