

BEIJING SMOG

A PEOPLE'S MOVEMENT FOR THE TRUTH

STORY: TIBET
ACTION INSTITUTE
ART: JP

DECEMBER 2011, BEIJING



THREE YEARS AFTER ALL THE FANFARE OF THE OLYMPICS, THE CITY WAS REELING FROM HEAVY POLLUTION LIKE A BAD HANGOVER..



.. BUT CAN'T YOU BOOK ANOTHER FLIGHT, HONEY?

NO, THEY'VE CANCELLED 700 FLIGHTS!



I KNOW, IT MUST BE THE AWFUL POLLUTION. YET ON TV, THE FORECAST SAID 'CLEAR AND SUNNY'..

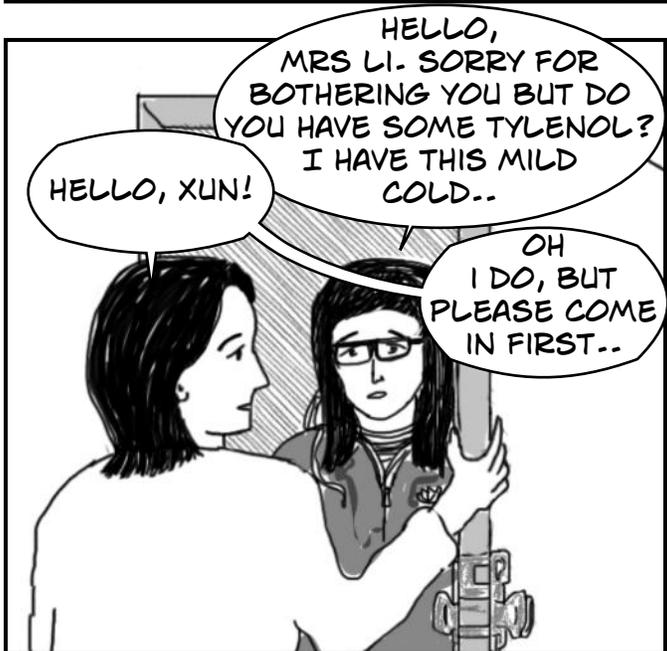
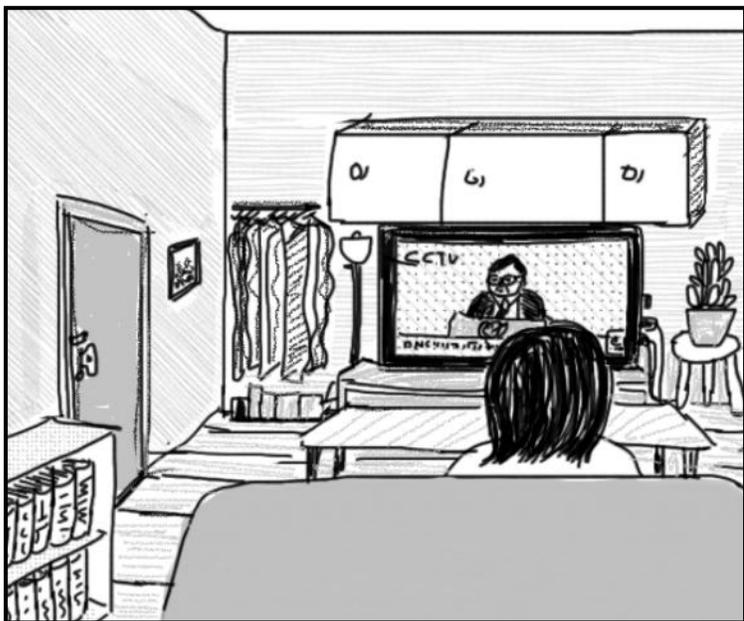


I WISH I COULD TAKE OUR BABY OUTSIDE FOR A STROLL.

"..WE HAVE CLOSED SOME OF THE HIGHWAYS. THE TRAFFIC INCONVENIENCE IS REGRETTED.."



"..BUT WE REQUEST ALL CITIZENS NOT TO SPREAD LIES AND RUMORS ABOUT THERE BEING A POLLUTION PROBLEM.."



HELLO, XUN!

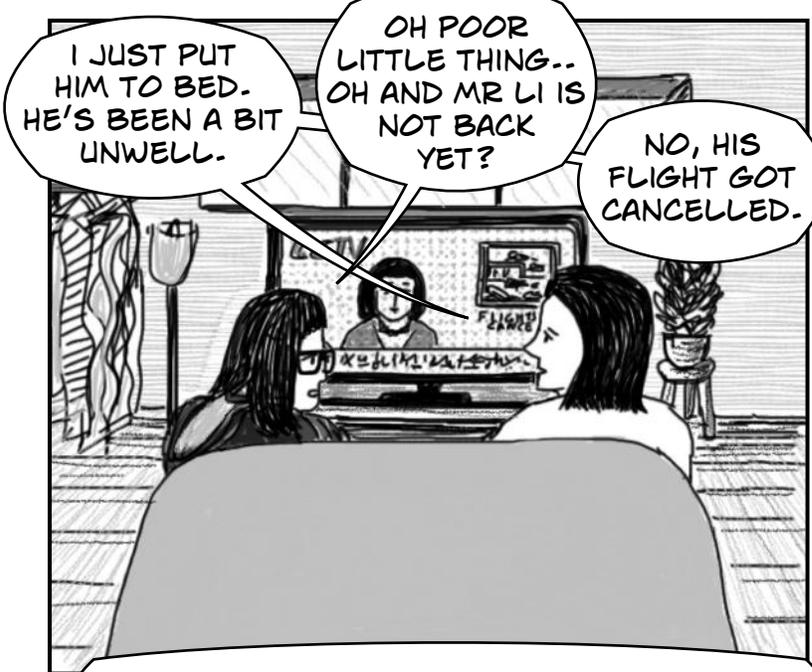
HELLO, MRS LI. SORRY FOR BOTHERING YOU BUT DO YOU HAVE SOME TYLENOL? I HAVE THIS MILD COLD..

OH I DO, BUT PLEASE COME IN FIRST..



HERE YOU GO..A CUP OF TEA WOULD DO YOU SOME GOOD.

OHH THANKS, MRS LI. WHERE'S YOUR BABY LITTLE DENG? IS HE ASLEEP RIGHT NOW?



I JUST PUT HIM TO BED. HE'S BEEN A BIT UNWELL.

OH POOR LITTLE THING... OH AND MR LI IS NOT BACK YET?

NO, HIS FLIGHT GOT CANCELLED.



IF HE'S STILL IN HONG KONG, MAYBE YOU SHOULD ASK HIM TO GET A FEW GAS MASKS AS GIFTS.

GAS MASKS?! ARE YOU SERIOUS, XUN? THAT'D BE THE WEIRDEST GIFT..

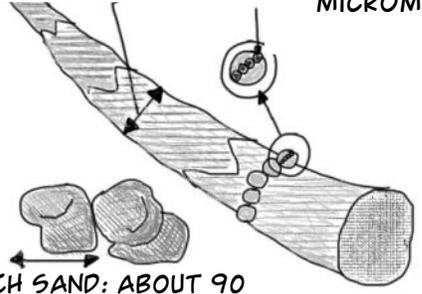
WEIRD, YES.. BUT THAT'S LIFE IN BEIJING RIGHT NOW. THE OTHER DAY I COULDN'T EVEN FIND A GAS MASK ONLINE. OUT OF STOCK, THEY SAID! YET OUR GOVERNMENT ONLY PUBLISHES **PM10** READINGS INSTEAD OF **PM2.5***. THEY SAY THE AIR IS ONLY 'SLIGHTLY POLLUTED'!

*PM (PARTICULATE MATTER) 2.5 ARE AIR POLLUTANTS TWO AND A HALF MICRONS IN DIAMETER. THEY ARE SMALL ENOUGH TO ENTER INTO OUR RESPIRATORY AND BLOOD SYSTEM, CAUSING ADVERSE HEALTH EFFECTS.



HUMAN HAIR : 50-70 MICROMETERS IN DIAMETER

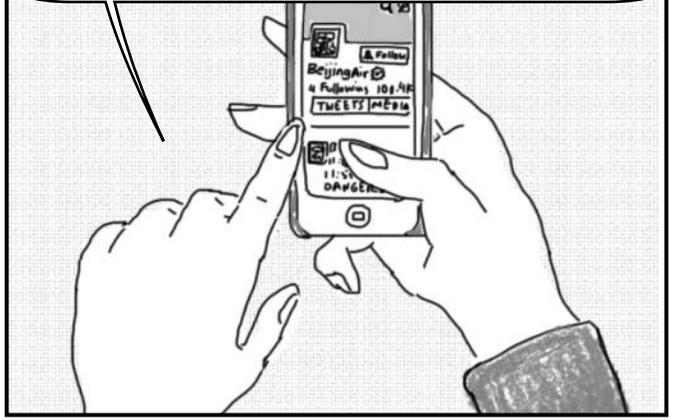
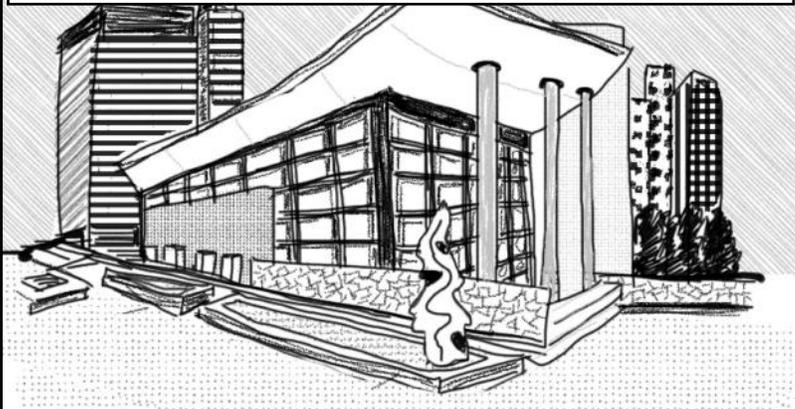
PM2.5: COMBUSTION PARTICLES, METALS, ETC, LESS THAN 2.5 MICROMETERS



FINE BEACH SAND: ABOUT 90 MICROMETERS IN SIZE

"YOU KNOW WHO IS MEASURING THE REAL POLLUTION LEVEL IN BEIJING? THE **U.S. EMBASSY**. AND THEY SAY THE AIR QUALITY IS **HAZARDOUS**."

MANY ARE FOLLOWING THE EMBASSY'S **TWITTER*** FEED WHERE THEY PUBLISH HOURLY PM 2.5 MEASUREMENTS. AND IT IS NOT LOOKING GOOD FOR OUR CITY..



*TWITTER IS BLOCKED IN CHINA BUT MANY PEOPLE FIND WAYS TO USE IT ANYWAY.

XUN WAS NOT ALONE. ON SINA WEIBO (SIMILAR TO TWITTER) CHINA'S NETIZENS WERE HAVING HEATED DISCUSSIONS ABOUT THE POLLUTION AND VENTING THEIR FRUSTRATION AT THE AUTHORITIES.



"MY NOSE HAS HURT FOR THE PAST FEW DAYS!"

"IF THINGS KEEP GOING LIKE THIS, A GOOD NUMBER OF PEOPLE ARE SIMPLY GOING TO COLLAPSE!"

"THANKS TO THE PARTY FOR LETTING US LIVE IN A FAIRY TALE LAND!"

"HMM.. I LOVE THE SMELL OF SMOG IN THE MORNING!"

CELEBRITY WEIBO USERS BEGAN RE-POSTING U.S. EMBASSY PM2.5 READINGS TO MILLIONS OF FOLLOWERS AND SHARING THEIR OPINIONS ON THE ISSUE. AMONG THEM WAS INVESTOR XUE MANZI



THE CHILDREN'S AUTHOR ZHENG YUANJIE ..



.. AND THE REAL ESTATE TYCOON PAN SHIYI.



EMBARRASSED BY HOW MANY PEOPLE WERE SEEING THE U.S. EMBASSY NUMBERS, CHINESE OFFICIALS STARTED ATTACKING THE AMERICANS FOR 'CONFUSING THE PUBLIC'.

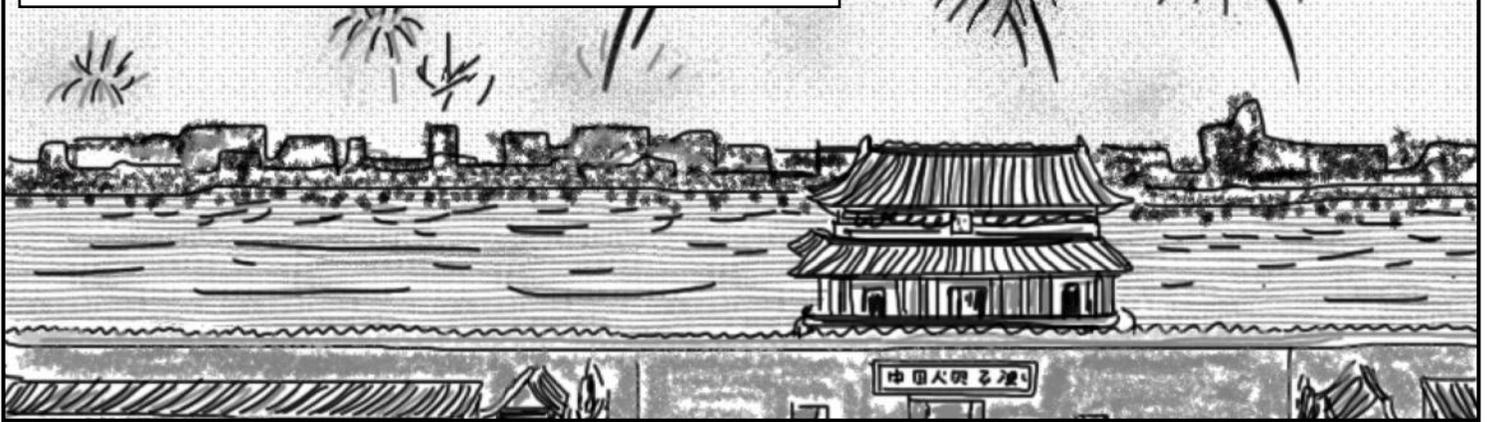
THEN, A CHINADIALOGUE JOURNALIST EXPOSED THAT OFFICIALS WERE ACTUALLY DEFLATING THE POLLUTION STATISTICS BY ADDING NEW MEASURING STATIONS IN CLEANER SUBURBS!



STEVEN Q. ANDREWS



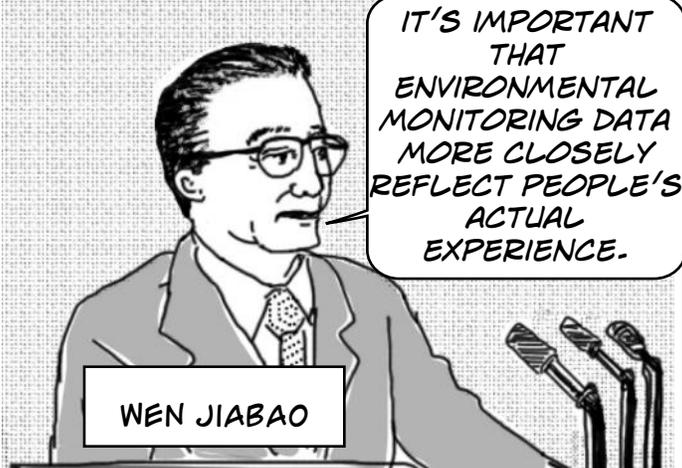
JANUARY, 2012. CHINESE NEW YEAR. AS ONLINE PRESSURE CONTINUED TO BUILD, THE CHINESE GOVERNMENT BEGAN TO REALIZE THEY WOULD LOSE ALL CREDIBILITY ON THIS MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE UNLESS THEY TOOK ACTION. HIGH-LEVEL OFFICIALS BEGAN SAYING THINGS HAD TO CHANGE, AND FINALLY, THEY DID.



BIG NEWS! OFFICIALS ARE SAYING THEY'LL FINALLY START PUBLISHING HOURLY PM2.5 MEASUREMENTS FOR BEIJING. ALL THAT ONLINE OUTCRY WORKED!!

THAT'S INCREDIBLE! A NEW YEAR'S GIFT FROM THE GOVERNMENT.. IF YOU CAN CALL IT THAT.

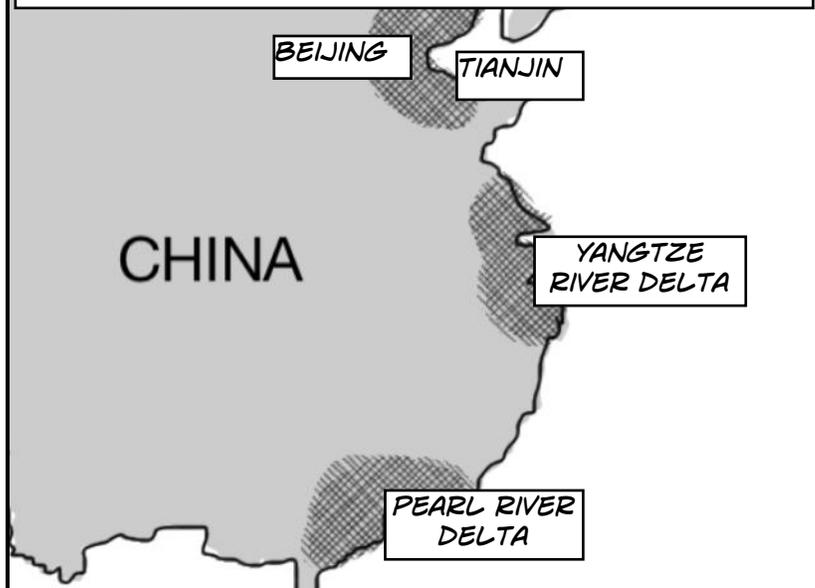
"THEY'VE ALSO CALLED FOR STRICTER MONITORING STANDARDS AND ARE GOING TO PUBLISH LEVELS OF OZONE."



IT'S IMPORTANT THAT ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING DATA MORE CLOSELY REFLECT PEOPLE'S ACTUAL EXPERIENCE.

WEN JIABAO

"THE NEW STANDARDS WILL BE APPLIED IN BEIJING AND OTHER KEY CITIES, AND EXTENDED TO THE WHOLE COUNTRY BY 2016."



IF YOU ASK ME, THEY SHOULD JUST DO IT RIGHT AWAY!



STILL, IT IS SOMETHING.. A SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT VICTORY FOR EVERYONE WHO TOOK ACTION.

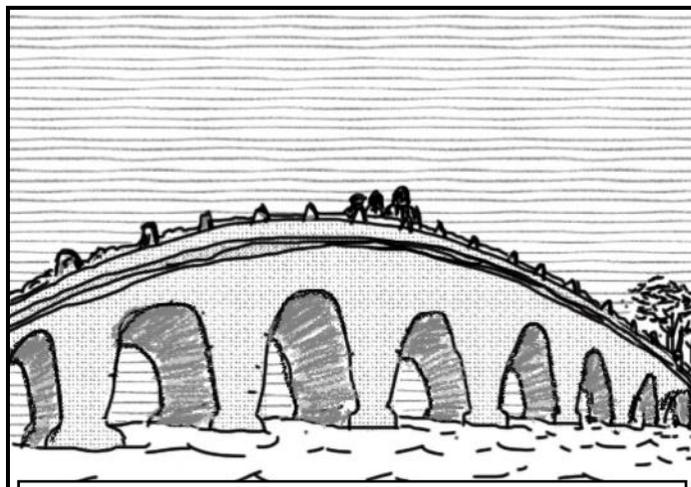


YES, WITH SO MANY THOUSANDS SPEAKING OUT, INCLUDING CELEBRITIES, THE GOVERNMENT COULDN'T JUST MAKE THIS DISAPPEAR AND KEEPING TELLING US LIES.

AND IT WAS SAFER TO PARTICIPATE WHEN SO MANY PEOPLE WERE INVOLVED AND THEY DIDN'T HAVE TO GATHER IN THE STREETS.



AHH THERE YOU GO, DEAR.. I HOPE YOU CAN SEE WHAT A LOVELY EVENING THIS IS.



THE PM2.5 CAMPAIGN WAS A HUGE SUCCESS FOR ONLINE ORGANIZING IN CHINA, SHOWING THE POTENTIAL POWER OF WIDESPREAD MOBILIZATION OVER THE INTERNET.