Abolitionism and Ecosocial Work: Towards Equity, Liberation and Environmental Justice

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Abstract

The ecosocial work approach incorporates the environment into social justice frameworks. It calls for holistic practices that centre Indigenous and Global South voices, transdisciplinarity, anti-oppressive strategies in micro–macro practice and sustainability. In this article, we argue that the integration of abolitionist theory and practice within ecosocial work—specifically the reduction or elimination of social work from carceral systems that harm the environment and marginalised people—will better equip social workers to meet these goals. To this end, we critically examine three sites of ongoing abolitionist struggle—militaries, prisons and disinvested communities—to demonstrate reimagined strategies for an environmentally just future. Our analysis reveals areas where the ecosocial approach and abolitionism intersect, and how one might inform the other. We conclude by calling for future research to integrate abolitionist ideas into ecosocial work research, education and practice. In integrating environmental justice and abolition, ecosocial work will be better positioned to critique and resist its location in racialised capitalist systems that perpetuate economic, environmental, racial and social injustices.

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Introduction

> Should we strain to squeeze out the last drops of life out of a failing, deteriorating and unjust system? Or should we instead devote our creative and collective energies towards envisioning and building a radically different form of living? —Grace Lee Boggs with Scott Kurashige (2012)

Legacies of white supremacy, imperialism and settler colonialism have shaped a global socio-political context in which Black and Indigenous people, people of colour and the poor bear the heaviest burdens associated with environmental degradation, climate change and food and water insecurity. In many cases, these marginalised communities are also over surveilled, over incarcerated and over policed. Yet, despite the social work profession's engagement with people and communities harmed by environmental racism and carceral systems, social work scholarship has minimally examined why and how struggles for environmental justice and abolition are related, thus neglecting possibilities for the development of holistic social action.

This article begins to address this gap by demonstrating why an ecosocial work approach, grounded in an abolitionist analysis, provides a pathway for the profession to better realise its social justice commitments. We demonstrate how state-sanctioned violence results in harm to marginalised communities and the places they live, necessitating an integration of environmental justice organising and abolitionism. From there, we introduce ongoing global struggles that integrate abolitionist and environmental justice in three settings: militaries, prisons and disinvested communities. These struggles provide examples of how ecosocial work can better integrate environmental justice with abolitionist theory and practice to dismantle and defund oppressive systems whilst working collectively to create socially just alternatives.

Towards an abolitionist ecosocial work

In this section, we introduce two approaches to social change: ecosocial work (which includes environmental justice organising) and abolition. We note points of conceptual overlap, including critical analyses of capitalism and its impacts, along with calls for resistance.

Ecosocial work

Ecosocial work presents an alternative to mainstream social work's historical and contemporary complicity within Anthropocentric systems of global capitalism (Närhi and Matthies, 2018). This evolving approach emerged from the understanding that economic, environmental and social systems are interconnected and that a growth-oriented economic system, overconsumption and resource hoarding contribute to widespread inequality, catastrophic disasters and the unprecedented loss of biodiversity (Dominelli, 2012; Rambaree *et al.*, 2019). Ecosocial work broadens the profession's conceptualisation of 'person in environment', going beyond the social environment to include natural and built environments, adding environmental crises as a dimension of social work practice (Kemp, 2011; Teixeira and Krings, 2015; Stamm, 2023). It calls for sustainable, transdisciplinary and anti-oppressive practices that centre the voices and priorities of Indigenous and Global South peoples (Boetto, 2016; Ramsay and Boddy, 2017; Närhi and Matthies, 2018).

Although the specific definitions and domains of the ecosocial paradigm are contested, with blurry boundaries among ecosocial work, environmental social work and green social work struggles (Krings *et al.*, 2020), we maintain that ecosocial theorising and practice ought to integrate principles of environmental justice, acting in solidarity with ongoing environmental justice.

The roots of the environmental justice movement are grounded in Black, Indigenous, Latine and Asian Pacific Islander communities that organised in their neighbourhoods and workplaces to prevent exposure to toxic substances and contamination and to push for respect and representation within land use decision-making processes (Bullard, 1993; Rao and Teixeira, 2020; Krings and Copic, 2021; Perkins, 2021). Environmental justice scholars and activists, therefore, employ a critical and structural analysis that identifies white supremacy, settler colonialism, imperialism and racial capitalism as root causes of environmental racism and environmental injustices (Teixeira *et al.*, 2019; Mathias *et al.*, 2023). These political and social forces result in place-based harms due to the devaluing of and violence against Black and Indigenous people and people of colour, especially the poor and the working class and the lands they inhabit (Pulido, 2017; Thurber *et al.*, forthcoming; Ybarra, 2021).

Abolitionist scholarship and activism

The abolitionist approach, too, identifies racial capitalism as a root cause of systems of oppression, necessitating the creation of alternative anti-oppressive structures and practices. Abolitionism, often referred to as the abolition movement, emerged from the historical socio-political

movement to abolish slavery. This movement was primarily led by Black activists and scholars like Harriet Tubman, W. E. B. Dubois and Frederick Douglass, who promoted the emancipation of Black enslaved people and the abolition of the global slave trade and called for transformative change and complete liberation (Heynen and Ybarra, 2021).

The contemporary abolitionist movement is led by Black and Indigenous people and people of colour and relies on a community-building approach. Following early abolitionists, they call for the immediate, unconditional and total elimination of slavery in all forms, in addition to the elimination of other forms of oppression such as colonialism, racism and sexism. Abolitionists aim to create a society free from oppression and exploitation, with complete economic, political and social equality. Abolition often centres on dismantling carceral institutions, limiting the power and scope of their influence and shifting resources away from carceral institutions and towards investments in marginalised communities.

Thus, abolition is more than just a 'practice of negation' (Rodriguez, 2019), meaning, it goes beyond defunding and refuting current systems of racial and class domination. Instead, it places equal emphasis on reimagining and generating more egalitarian, community-centred alternatives (Kaba, 2021). Central to abolitionist thought is the idea of radical transformation of social systems that promote and reinforce inequality, oppression and injustice. Abolition praxis entails recognising the humanity of all people affected by carceral systems and working towards building safe, healthy and just communities (Kaba, 2021; Cullors, 2022; Davis *et al.*, 2022).

Social work is beginning to grapple with questions about if and how to integrate abolitionist thought and ideas into its paradigms and practices (O'Brien *et al.*, 2020; Hunter and Wroe, 2022; Murray *et al.*, 2023). In addition to reckoning with the profession's complicity within racial capitalism, it is questioning how to extricate itself from carceral systems relating to child welfare, immigration and policing (Detlaff *et al.*, 2020; Kim, 2020; Jacobs *et al.*, 2021). We extend this work by applying an abolitionist analysis to environmental injustice broadly, and to ecosocial work specifically. As four social work scholars, we are inspired by the work of abolitionists who came before us, predominantly Black women, and as budding abolitionists, we humbly seek to integrate and amplify their call for a more critical and antiracist approach to social action.

Cases of abolitionist resistance to environmental injustices across militaries, prisons and disinvested communities

Environmental injustices and carceral systems are inextricably linked and grounded in systems of settler colonialism, imperialism and racial

capitalism (Ybarra, 2021; Brock and Stephens-Griffin, 2022). The term *abolitionist ecology* integrates struggles for abolitionism with environmental justice organising by combining 'theorizing against and about the continued existence of white supremacist logics that continue to produce uneven racial development within land and property relations' with 'well-informed and deliberate organizing' (Heynen, 2016, p. 5). In the following sections, we extend this concept to abolitionist and environmental struggles in three contexts: militaries, prisons and disinvested neighbourhoods. In each section, we first demonstrate the scope and root causes of human and environmental harm associated with that setting. Next, we examine ongoing global struggles to dismantle oppressive systems and institutions, and efforts to replace them with democratic, inclusive and sustainable alternatives. These cases demonstrate how abolitionist and environmental justice struggles are related, revealing practice principles relevant to anti-oppressive and antiracist ecosocial work.

Militaries and environmental degradation

Militaries harm marginalised peoples and the environment in myriad ways, including through the overconsumption of fossil fuels and the resultant carbon emissions; the use of toxins that harm soil, water and the atmosphere; deforestation; interference with species' migration routes; and causing displacement of people due to conflict and war (Westing, 2008). Multiple countries have used Indigenous land as testing sites for nuclear weapons and as places to dump nuclear waste (Maurer and Hogue, 2020). Between 1945 and 2017, over two thousand nuclear tests were conducted, mostly on Indigenous land, resulting in high rates of cancers and stillbirths in these communities (International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons, n.d.).

There is no mandate for countries to include military carbon emissions as part of their annual emissions reporting, despite established linkages between carbon emissions and climate change (Akkerman *et al.*, 2022). Yet, there is a correlation between military spending and carbon emissions, with the USA accounting for most of the world's military expenses (38 per cent), followed by China, India, the UK and Russia. All these countries are among the world's biggest carbon emitters. Even when not engaged in active conflict, militaries are significant emitters of greenhouse gases. The 2019 carbon footprint of militaries in the European Union was an estimated 24.8 million metric tons, equivalent to the footprint of 14 million cars per year (Parkinson and Cottrell, 2019).

War and occupation also have deleterious environmental and social impacts. The 2003 war in Iraq released an estimated 100 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, roughly equivalent to an additional 25 million cars on the road per year (Reisch and Kretzmann, 2008).

The conflict between Ukraine and Russia, which began in 2022, caused the destabilisation of the nuclear power plant in Chernobyl, threatening further contamination in the region, and displaced thousands of people seeking safety (Claußen, 2022). This is not limited to the Ukrainian conflict. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates there are currently 108.4 million displaced people in the world, mainly due to conflict, violence, persecution or other disruptions to public order. The majority of those fleeing for safety are from places with long-term conflict involving outside militaries such as Afghanistan, Syria and Ukraine (UNHCR, 2023).

Militaries use violence, or the threat of it, to safeguard industries that extract non-renewable metals, minerals, oil and other natural resources, contributing to unbridled environmental damage (Belcher *et al.*, 2020). Environmental and local activists opposing these industries and their associated impacts are seen as a threat to the state and to corporate interests. Although it is estimated that an environmental activist is murdered every two days, most often in the Global South or an Indigenous community, states often delay or neglect investigations of these crimes (Hines, 2022). Similarly, environmental protests and dissent have witnessed disproportionate harassment, infiltration, surveillance and criminalisation from private and state security forces; perhaps most egregiously, among Indigenous communities protecting their ancestral lands and water (Birss, 2017; Dennis and Bell, 2020).

An abolitionist response to militarism and its environmental impacts

Abolitionism seeks to raise awareness of and opposition to militaries and the multitude of ways they damage human and environmental health. In addition, abolitionism opposes military spending, globally estimated to be at a record $2 trillion per year (Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2022), and argues that critical resources should instead be invested in necessary social programmes and in mitigating harm to people and places impacted by climate change. Although we acknowledge the dangers associated with protesting military organisations, there are examples of abolitionist work that has been successful in defunding them and reallocating funds to public services.

Costa Rica, for example, abolished its military in 1949, following a civil war (Abarca and Ramírez, 2017). Money previously used on military spending was reallocated towards universal education and health care (Hickel, 2018). Today, the country is recognised as a global leader in preserving the environment and aims to decarbonise its economy by 2050 (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019). Its residents enjoy one of the highest life satisfaction rates in Central America whilst

maintaining high life expectancy and a low ecological footprint (Hickel, 2018; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2022). Since its shift in national priorities, Costa Rica has not been attacked by another nation, nor has it had a dictator or an armed conflict (Abarca and Ramírez, 2017).

Prisons and environmental degradation

Racial and ethnic minorities and Indigenous people account for nearly 50 per cent of prison populations in countries across the globe, including the USA (Penal Reform International, 2022). The USA has the highest incarceration rate in the world and spends roughly $80 billion on corrections annually (McLaughlin *et al.*, 2016; Widra and Herring, 2021). Prisons in the USA also expose incarcerated individuals to extreme temperatures, coal ash, nuclear waste, airborne toxins and contaminated water (Fedock *et al.*, 2022; Gribble and Pellow, 2022). Toxic conditions associated with flooding, sewage system malfunctions and mould can contribute to serious health impacts, including respiratory issues, rashes and cancer (Cartier, 2020). Prisons pollute and create environmental concerns for their surrounding communities (Prison Ecology Project, 2022; Opsal *et al.*, 2023) and are notoriously unprepared for extreme weather events (Wang, 2022). As a part of their prison labour, incarcerated individuals in the USA have been deployed to fight California wildfires, to prepare sandbags for expected floods, and to clean up oil spills and debris from hurricanes (Gribble and Pellow, 2022). Furthermore, 589 federal and state prisons are sited within three miles of a Superfund cleanup site (typically abandoned toxic waste dumps and sites, among the most contaminated places in the USA), and 134 of those prisons are located within just one mile of such a site (Bernd *et al.*, 2017). Prisons are not safe and are not conducive to environmental justice. From an abolitionist perspective, prisons are a driving force of environmental injustice (Pellow, 2016; Purdum *et al.*, 2021).

An abolitionist response to prisons

Prison abolitionists work to end societal dependence on policing and prisons as vehicles for social control, oppression and domination of people and communities (Bagaric *et al.*, 2021; Calathes, 2017; Davis, 2003). Efforts to address the root causes of incarceration, including social ideologies of racial domination and capital accumulation, are central to the mission of prison abolition (Davis, 2003; Bagaric *et al.*, 2021; Davis *et al.*, 2022). These social ideologies provide the foundations for racial capitalism and are ingrained in white supremacist culture and institutions

(Davis, 2003). Prominent abolitionist scholars ask, 'What would we have to change in our existing societies in order to render them less dependent on the putative security associated with carceral approaches to justice?' (Davis *et al.*, 2022). Abolition, then, calls for replacing prisons with community participation that addresses violence, coupled with social supports that provide access to housing, education, food and physical and mental health care, to address the root causes of many criminalised behaviours (Lawston and Meiners, 2014; Davis *et al.*, 2022).

Prison abolition might take different forms, depending on the theoretical approach used. Embracing an *abolition ecology* may be particularly useful in addressing the relationship between racial capitalism and environmental justice. A 'prison abolitionist ethic' and 'penal abolitionism' are also relevant to how abolition theory and practice can inform ecosocial work. A prison abolitionist ethic is a specific orientation to abolition that centres on ending the practice of confinement. This abolition orientation comes from legal scholarship, which draws attention to the dehumanisation, structural inequalities and violence that extend beyond arrest and sentencing and into prison practice (McLeod, 2015). Penal abolition, similarly, is a framework for challenging penal practices. Penal abolition argues that prison practices heighten rather than resolve social issues and, in response, provides both a set of values for abolition (including 'thinking, speaking, acting, reflecting, hearing and changing language, culture, and world') and a foundation for praxis that engages those with lived experience in strategically challenging power and domination (Coyle and Scott, 2021).

One US organisation that has played a significant role in charting a path towards prison abolition is Critical Resistance (CR). In 2000, CR led a campaign to stop the construction of the Delano II prison in California. It started by filing an environmental lawsuit challenging California's environmental analysis of the proposed prison site, alleging that the report downplayed potential negative effects on the surrounding community's air and water quality. The campaign was carefully constructed and included a litigation strategy, coalition building, media outreach and grassroots organising (Braz and Gilmore, 2006). Litigation, specifically, provided CR with a platform to involve other anti-prison groups and different constituencies in coalition building and action (Braz and Gilmore, 2006). CR leveraged concerns about the state budget crisis, compelling teachers and social service providers to have a personal stake in the issue. CR's press releases were successful in swaying public opinion. It collaborated with the California Prison Moratorium Project in organising a conference attended by farmers and civil rights activists; this provided a venue for building political alliances among seemingly disparate groups.

In 2001, a superior court ruled that the environmental impact report for Delano II was inadequate and that the prison could only be

constructed after further environmental review. This was successfully appealed by California, prompting CR to bring the issue to the state senate, which then withdrew funding for Delano II. This would have effectively cancelled the project; however, it was ultimately reinstated and California moved forward with construction (Braz and Gilmore, 2006). CR challenged state action and capacity at several levels, organised across scales, and took advantage of 'competing interests of municipal, regional and statewide public entities ... and federal regulations' (Miyake, 2021, p. 602). Although CR and the movement it built did not lead to a moratorium, its abolition work was foundational (Coyle and Schept, 2018; Miyake, 2021).

Disinvested communities and environmental degradation

A history of structurally racist urban planning and housing practices shaped cities in the USA in a way that concentrated Black, Indigenous and people of colour in disinvested neighbourhoods. Environmental justice scholars suggest that these communities, often still segregated, are deprived of key resources essential to their well-being, such as access to affordable and quality health care, education and housing, among other basic needs due to governmental and systemic neglect (Anderson and Oncken, 2020). These places, sometimes described as *sacrifice zones* because of the associated loss of human life and destruction of the natural environment within them (Lerner, 2012), are not only under resourced and over policed, but they often also house toxic and hazardous land uses like interstates, industry and waste disposal facilities that contribute to adverse health and social outcomes (Gibson, 2007; Krings and Thomas, 2018; Larrabee Sonderlund *et al.*, 2022).

Resistance to localised environmental injustices globally, including opposition to extractive industries and infrastructure projects, is violently policed by military and police forces, private security and militias. Environmental contamination and over surveillance can be understood as forms of toxicity in communities of colour, which prevent the development of safe and sustainable communities. In addition, the expansion of the carceral state is associated with a simultaneous disinvestment of resources from programmes and services that would otherwise strengthen communities (Thompson, 2018).

Abolitionist responses within disinvested communities

Abolitionist campaigns, though concerned with dismantling oppressive structures and punitive institutions like militaries, prisons and policing, also seek to build alternative, socially just systems. They do so by

integrating community-building and mutual aid strategies to reclaim places, spaces and community power (Spade, 2020). They can provide ecosocial workers, environmental justice organisers and impacted communities with insights, tools and analytic frameworks beyond harm prevention and mitigation. We point to two specific frameworks—*abolitionist climate justice* (Heynen and Ybarra, 2021; Ranganathan and Bratman, 2021) and *collective survival strategies* (Bell *et al.*, 2019) as examples of how communities protect themselves from economic, environmental and social harm. These strategies range from everyday acts of caring and healing, such as shared dinners, teaching about one's environment and native plants, or singing freedom songs, to ongoing struggles for control over land, food sovereignty and water provision. Actions are organic, self-organised and autonomous, rather than dependent on outside funders or nonprofit organisations (Bell *et al.*, 2019; Heynen and Ybarra, 2021).

A central project of both abolition and localised environmental justice campaigns is to challenge taken-for-granted beliefs about the value and disposability of marginalised peoples and their land (Pulido, 2017; Krings *et al.*, 2019). This includes posing critical questions that centrally relate to both abolition and environmental injustice, such as querying what 'safety' looks like, and for whom it is provided (Davis, 2016). Integrating abolitionist ideas and principles into the environmental justice movement and ecosocial approach can spur broader conversations about hegemonic and anthropocentric modes of thought, such as ideas about the primacy of economic growth, the nature of ownership, and the notion of property, including their connection to white, male supremacy (Boggs and Kurashige, 2012; Brock and Stephens-Griffin, 2022).

A specific example of localised organising that integrates abolitionist and environmental concerns can be found in the work of *La Resistencia*, an abolitionist collective based in Tacoma, Washington (Ybarra, 2021). *La Resistencia* was established in 2014 after a group of people, led by undocumented residents, organised in solidarity with detained activists who were on a hunger strike to demand improved conditions—access to food and medicine—in an immigrant detention centre. Over time, *La Resistencia*, the detained activists, and their allies expanded their claims, calling for an end to immigrant deportation and the closure of the centre due to its location on top of a toxic coal-tar waste pit. Ybarra (2021) situates the Tacoma case as one of many detention centres in the USA that are located on or in proximity to toxic land, operated under contract and for profit, and located in remote places outside of the view and consciousness of people with wealth and those who are not immigrants. She notes that widespread ignorance about the lives of detained immigrants, including ignorance of their exposure to toxic substances, is a barrier to solidarity and collective action.

Whilst many abolitionists and critical environmental justice theorists are suspicious of the state as a protector (Pellow, 2021; Pulido, 2017), *La Resistencia* viewed the local government as a site of struggle. They leveraged 'inside' tools, including municipal codes, local ordinances, and lawsuits, to reduce the feasibility of incarceration. Simultaneously, they employed 'outside' tactics such as rallies, encampments and road blockages in locations where buses were filled with people scheduled to be deported, to shift the political consciousness of Tacoma residents who previously were unaware of the conditions within the detention centre. This combination of inside and outside approaches worked to make 'caging people logistically difficult and politically unpopular' (Ybarra, 2021, p. 37).

Ultimately, Tacoma's residents and city council were forced to grapple with the knowledge that there were detained immigrants in their proximity, and some began to think of them as people in need of care, or even as neighbours. This shift is especially instructive because La Resistencia's campaign centred on the voices and needs of detained and often undocumented immigrants—people who often are excluded or deprioritised in discussions of immigration reform, housing justice and social welfare policy. *La Resistencia* continues to build coalitions that challenge ideologies grounded in the devaluing and disposability of people and land. This includes questioning policies and practices that manifest in inequitable standards for environmental cleanup, for housing and for criminalisation, deportation and incarceration—in Tacoma and beyond.

Discussion and implications for social work

In this article, we examined three sites of abolitionist activism that intersect with and can inform ecosocial work. With common goals of addressing systems of oppression and injustice, both environmental justice and abolitionist movements are closely aligned with social work and the people and communities with whom social workers engage. As such, they can be complementary forces in the shared goal of liberatory praxis.

Social workers' recognition of environmental justice and abolition has only recently grown, in part due to visible climate change and police brutality (Krings *et al.*, 2020; Hunter and Wroe, 2022). In response, growing numbers of social workers recognise the importance of engaging with environmental justice or abolitionist perspectives to help imagine and create meaningful change within their communities. Here we consider the importance of integrating the two.

Abolition and environmental justice both seek an end to discrimination and are rooted in justice principles. For these approaches to succeed, issues of climate and racial justice that are deeply intertwined with other forms of oppression must be addressed. 'Slow' structural violence,

such as mismanagement of hazardous industrial waste, resource extraction and use of toxins that pollute the ground, water and air, as well as impacts of highly visible events such as police shootings or sudden disasters, could demonstrate symptoms of disinvestment in communities due to systemic and historic racism or economic inequality. Addressing root causes would involve recognising how power dynamics shape access to resources—something abolitionists strive towards through resistance against systemic oppression. Abolitionists call for breaking down exploitative and oppressive systems but also, and perhaps more importantly, rebuilding community-centred alternatives.

Questioning ideas and systems that are often taken for granted can reveal new possibilities and forms of action. Specifically, by embedding abolitionist ideas into environmental justice work, groups can challenge the assumed necessity of militaries, prisons and policing; overcome the mythology of the state as the protector and arbiter of justice; and work to create social conditions in which these practices are not necessary (Brock and Stephens-Griffin, 2022). Reconsidering what 'safety' means can result in the acknowledgement that the military, police and other carceral and punitive mechanisms do not make communities safe but that a healthy environment and a robust social fabric can.

The example of Costa Rica demonstrates the importance of understanding economic and political systems and the possibility of radical change. The struggle and near win by activists in the Delano II case, too, suggests that activists, including ecosocial workers, can have an impact by engaging within and outside of the political system and across scales to maximise reach, build coalitions and foster support. And whilst legacies of colonisation and structural racism shape contemporary urban landscapes, the example of *La Resistencia* shows that these legacies can also inform local resistance. With attention to the place- and identity-based communities most impacted by environmental injustices and the carceral state, there is potential to develop coalitions linking these issues.

By building solidarity among environmental justice and abolition movements, new coalitions will be better equipped to transform social and political systems that currently resist a 'just transition' or other more 'radical' changes (Matthies *et al.*, 2020; Rao and Teixeira, 2020). The cases presented here integrate the need for healing, care and rehumanisation with emancipatory goals of freedom and liberation, including the uprooting of oppressive systems and the reimagining of practices and systems. They build upon critical feminist scholarship that argues that political struggles must be rooted in the experiences of home, neighbourhood and workplace and that an ethic of care is core to radical politics (Ranganathan and Bratman, 2021). These integrated values push environmental justice campaigns to situate their work as perhaps beginning with localised struggles, whilst always building towards freedom and liberation. Abolition reminds us that where governments are unable or

unwilling to centre an ecosocially just world is exactly where social workers ought to be, pushing from all levels of society for the future we deserve. By integrating environmental justice and abolition, ecosocial work will be better able to critique and resist its location in racialised capitalist systems that perpetuate social, economic, racial and environmental injustices.

Conclusion

This article is an invitation to incorporate abolition and environmental justice theory and practice within social work practice, education and scholarship, specifically by (re)imagining an anti-oppressive and antiracist ecosocial work. Drawing upon the ongoing work of community organisations that integrate abolitionist and environmental justice in their work and analysis, we have presented three cases that demonstrate how an abolitionist perspective can fit within the ecosocial approach. These cases illustrate how militaries and prisons harm disinvested communities and the environment, whilst also demonstrating the importance of building power in these communities and advocating for policy changes that defund carceral institutions and reinvest in social protection systems. Social work is uniquely situated to work in solidarity with ongoing environmental justice and abolitionist struggles, and the potential of an abolition-informed ecosocial approach is infinite.

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