

## Foreward [from EcoSocial Work: Environmental Practice and Advocacy]

By: [Meredith Powers](#)

Powers, M. (2023). Foreward. In R. Forbes & K. Smith (Eds.), *Ecosocial Work: Environmental Practice and Advocacy* (pp. v – vii). NASW Press.

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### **Abstract:**

I imagine many of you are eager to read all the wonderful expertise and wisdom found in this book on ecosocial work practice, and some may feel desperate to find hope, solace, and tangible ways to move to action. I commend you, but also urge you: “Don’t just do something, sit there!” Obviously, this is explicitly the opposite of what we feel with the dire sense of urgency and are often prodded, “Don’t just sit there, do something!” I say this to slow us down, in our overly fast-paced world, to invite you into intentional time to authentically experience this book. In this way you are taking a moment to “lean back” rather than “lean in,” to pause, to read, to reflect, to let things simmer, to digest, to unlearn, to disrupt, and to relearn. Some of you will find the content of this book new, while others may have been doing ecosocial work for decades. Some may have already embraced ecosocial worldviews, rather than the prevalent human-centric worldviews that wreak havoc on our world. I believe that all of us have something we can find in this collection of wisdom that will be novel, encouraging, and inspiring. I am thankful for these coeditors and authors, some of whom I am honored to call friends and others whom I am excited to know better. They have poured more than their time and energy into this resource; they have bravely shared what they have experienced, their perspectives, and their expertise on ecosocial work practice in great breadth and depth. In the chapters that follow, you will learn about their experiences with environmental justice, environmental racism, challenges faced by Native American and Indigenous peoples, housing disparities, reparations, art and activism, feminist participatory action research, disaster response, environmental refugees, community gardens, and teaching Ecosocial work - and more.

**Keywords:** ecosocial work | environmental justice | environmental racism

### **Chapter:**

**\*\*\*Note: Full text of chapter below**

# Foreword

**Meredith C. F. Powers**

Imagine many of you are eager to read all the wonderful expertise and wisdom found in this book on ecosocial work practice, and some may feel desperate to find hope, solace, and tangible ways to move to action. I commend you, but also urge you: “Don’t just do something, sit there!” Obviously, this is explicitly the opposite of what we feel with the dire sense of urgency and are often prodded, “Don’t just sit there, do something!” I say this to slow us down, in our overly fast-paced world, to invite you into intentional time to authentically experience this book. In this way you are taking a moment to “lean back” rather than “lean in,” to pause, to read, to reflect, to let things simmer, to digest, to unlearn, to disrupt, and to relearn. Some of you will find the content of this book new, while others may have been doing ecosocial work for decades. Some may have already embraced ecosocial worldviews, rather than the prevalent human-centric worldviews that wreak havoc on our world. I believe that all of us have something we can find in this collection of wisdom that will be novel, encouraging, and inspiring. I am thankful for these coeditors and authors, some of whom I am honored to call friends and others whom I am excited to know better. They have poured more than their time and energy into this resource; they have bravely shared what they have experienced, their perspectives, and their expertise on ecosocial work practice in great breadth and depth. In the chapters that follow, you will learn about their experiences with environmental justice, environmental racism, challenges faced by Native American and Indigenous peoples, housing disparities, reparations, art and activism, feminist participatory action research, disaster response, environmental refugees, community gardens, and teaching ecosocial work—and more.

Some of us still wrestle with impostor syndrome—feelings of inadequacy or like we have so little to offer to impact these complex, wicked problems we face in the world, both personally and professionally. But, all of us are actually experts on our own lives, with our own unique experiences, and in our own

particular places in the world. When we share our stories, we can move forward together. With that in mind, I invite you to learn from these authors, and then keep the conversation going. Share this with friends, family, colleagues . . . anyone! Find your sphere of influence and start there. Especially consider how you can make local impacts in your current location in the world.

Again, I encourage you to reach out to others to discuss the topics and ideas presented in this book, and connect with the authors, coeditors, and me for further discussion and action planning. Look in ecosocial work practice's global networks, such as the global Green/Ecosocial Work Collaborative Network, the International Federation of Social Workers Climate Justice Program, and within your local communities to find those who can encourage you, help sustain your spirit, and carry you when you feel like giving up. Prioritize time to rest, refuel, restore, and practice radical self-care and community care as you continue to work alongside one another. Foster the relationships you have with others, including your kinship with nonhuman beings. Find things that work for you to sustain your spirit, to help you get unstuck, and to reinvigorate you. For me, I find that ecotherapeutic practices that foster my connections with nature refuel me when I am feeling low from ecogrief, climate anxiety, and general despair at the state of the world or my own personal issues.

For example, even when I can't get outdoors, I enjoy nature through my indoor plants, many of which were given to me by friends, colleagues, and students. Some are on the window sill near a photo of the world, taken at night, showing the parts of the world that are lit up with electricity, and those without such access and/or privilege. Near these items, I also placed my Groot figurine, which appears to be guarding them all. This tree-like character, Groot, is from the movie *Guardians of the Galaxy*. Throughout the movie he says only, "I am Groot," except for in one scene. In this scene (spoiler alert), the team of guardians are all crashing down in a blazing spaceship to what seems like their certain death. However, as they fall, Groot grows his limbs/branches so quickly and prolifically that he encases his friends and saves them all from the crash. As this is happening one of his friends asks him, "Why are you doing this?" to which he responds, "We are Groot."

The lesson we can learn from Groot is that as we see climate injustices and other calamities around the world that seemingly grow by the minute, we can hold on to the hope that "We are Groot." Social workers serve, in a way, as guardians of the planet (maybe not the galaxy), and we can continue to grow together and create opportunities for resilience, regeneration, and hope within ourselves, in our communities, and with our clients. This also reminds me of a

favorite quote by Malcom X: “When ‘I’ is replaced with ‘we,’ even illness becomes wellness.”

I encourage you to share this book—and your ideas in response to it—with others far and wide. Finally, take time to celebrate the great work being done by social workers and community partners all over the globe, and inspire others to join with us for climate justice through ecosocial work practice.