Abolitionist Climate Justice, or ICE Will Melt

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Introduction

As climate scientists and environmental justice activists have long predicted, the impacts of climate change in the shape of hurricanes, heat waves, and wildfires have become relentless, hitting the Global North with urgency and impacts that hit the most vulnerable (and least responsible) in particularly devastating ways. Interconnected crises have long been the leitmotif of environmental justice activists, who defy static notions of home, time/history, and space/geography and who reject ideas of environment and protection/pollution as separate from race, class, gender, and indigeneity. It is precisely in this moment of interconnected crises that it becomes essential to foreground the stories and perspectives of environmental and climate justice activists. Environmental justice movements link diverse problems and defy state and corporate attempts to artificially separate out harms and issues (health from pollution, social from environmental factors). Activists have long understood the prevalence of violence for people of color and indigenous and poor people in the United States and globally and how narratives can act as a resource to reframe responses to such violence. For justice movements, it is not enough to say that problems are connected. When environmental and climate justice movements narrate connections between problems, they understand them as spatial, political, temporal, and ethical. These movements and the organizers and communities that make them fight and struggle against interconnected forces. They write and rewrite stories, make artwork, and seek to build and grow a different world than the one we currently inhabit.

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What does environmental justice look like in the face of interconnected disasters caused by environmental and state violence in its myriad forms: climate change, gentrification, policing, and deportation regimes? Culture and media offer a partial response in the form of abolitionist climate justice narratives. These narratives bridge distinct strands of abolitionist praxis: against incarceration/prisons/policing (including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Border Patrol), carbon emissions, and speciesism (hierarchy between human and nonhuman populations).[1] Abolitionist climate justice narratives enact an imaginative reclamation and recognition in a brutalizing economic and political system that seeks to deny the rights of survival for vulnerable peoples and communities, animals, and ecosystems. These narratives build kinship between people of color and animals and imagine what abolition might look like. They highlight conceptions of home and a politics of mutual aid, care, and solidarity in the face of climate crises that have provoked tribalism, closed borders, violence, and individualism.

My case study is a particular web series called *The North Pole*. Culture matters in defining and broadening the concept of abolitionist climate justice narratives and their audiences within the cultural sphere. I use a close reading of *The North Pole* and its characters within the broader context of its production grounded squarely from within the climate justice movement. *The North Pole* is a seven-episode, two-season show (each episode ranges from eight to seventeen minutes and is posted on YouTube and on the show's website).[2] The executive producers are Movement Generation (affiliated with the Climate Justice Alliance)[3] and actress Rosario Dawson.[4] *The North Pole* was created with a theory of change with storytelling and a focus on radical imagination as its core. Three of the characters—Nina, Benny, and Marcus—are working class, Black, and Latinx respectively and grew up in Oakland, and another—Finn—is a White transplant from Minnesota. In season one, the main themes are gentrification/eviction, geoengineering, and drought ("Culture Shift" n.d.; Dry 2017). In season two, migration, deportation, wildfires, asthma attacks, racist microaggressions, and the negative consequences of online centered organizing are the putative subjects.

Although I focus on *The North Pole*, it is not unique. Abolitionist climate justice narratives abound in hip-hop and spoken word.[5] The show represents a climate justice perspective that centers the lived experiences and perspectives of the peoples most impacted by (and least responsible for) climate change. It centralizes the voices and perspectives and the fight of young people of color in the Bay Area. *The North Pole* also represents different strands of abolitionism and, thus, is an important bridge between conversations and critiques that have not well integrated among parallel abolitionist movements—against prisons, policing, carbon, and species domination. In bridging seemingly disparate abolitionist theories and movements, *The North Pole* has the potential to speak with and expand the conversations among all through what I identify as abolitionist climate justice standpoints. Expanding these conversations

preempts a potential critique of each to build solidarities in imagining a more just and liberatory world without incarceration, climate chaos, and animal exploitation.

The show is an abolitionist climate justice narrative in that it highlights the links between climate change and social issues that are not traditionally thought of as environmental, specifically between housing/gentrification, policing, and immigrant deportation. The first half of this article introduces three seemingly disparate conceptions of abolition: abolition of policing/prisons/deportation, fossil fuel, and animal exploitation. The second half of the paper focuses on how *The North Pole* bridges these conceptions and, in doing so, brings a unique abolitionist climate justice perspective to the fore. Climate justice narratives rely on affective strategies, and an analytic attuned to these strategies identifies the agents and actors of climate disaster significantly differently from mainstream analyses of climate change in which science and policy discourses predominate. In this refusal to center science and policy discourses lies a rejection of undifferentiated causes ("humans did this" to "the planet") and an affective mode of despair and hopelessness. The Anthropocene concept has been critiqued from a number of perspectives, including Marxist, indigenous, and feminist stances.[6] Abolitionist climate justice narratives name their enemies clearly. They reject neoliberalism, polluters (particularly oil and gas companies), and white supremacy—and, thus, oppose venture capitalists, privatization proponents, real estate developers, gentrifiers, and racist cops. What makes *The North Pole* an abolitionist climate justice narrative is how the characters in the show become agents of political transformation. They build social movements by mobilizing in the face of overwhelming crises and odds and by centralizing a politics of care and solidarity.

The North Pole models a situation in which critical consciousness about kinship between people—particularly people of color and indigenous peoples—with animals, combined with capacious notions of home, lead the characters toward direct action to advance broadly abolitionist politics. For the protagonists, critical consciousness enables a shift from analyzing complex problems such as climate change to focusing squarely on direct action and social disruption. Once the characters understand how social precarity and environmental vulnerability are connected (and the role of histories of activism that precede their own moments), they are able to act, build solidarity, and grow opposition to hegemonic power and institutions. In the face of state-sanctioned violence, abolitionist climate justice narratives such as *The North Pole* center their resistance to dominant structures and institutions, thereby modeling what abolitionist and radical action looks like in the face of unrelenting, interconnected crises.

Abolitionist climate justice narratives begins in the terrain of consciousness and culture. Black radical and musician Boots Riley, who voices a central character in *The North Pole*, describes how "rebellion is edited out of the worlds we have built…we put those rebellions back into the stories we create and consume" (Noah 2018). *The North Pole* puts rebellion back into the story

of gentrification and climate change by linking important themes within animal and fossil fuel abolition. Its characters and storytellers are grounded in a cultural politics of home built upon artistic creation, love, and relationships (including with and among animals) imagined and lived in response to historical trauma, ongoing violence, and horrific forecasts of climate disasters. The seeds of a climate-just future can be found in the fight itself.

Abolitionist Threads and Antecedents

What does abolition mean in *The North Pole*? And why does the show's conception of abolition matter vis-à-vis climate justice? Abolition of prisons/policing/ICE, fossil fuel abolition, and abolition of species domination make similar arguments about the political task of freedom based on the history of emancipation movements from slavery. Each draws inspiration from the antislavery movement as its primary model, but how each represents that history offers some important touchstones for how abolitionist climate justice can bridge various abolitionisms. All three movements focus on the role of the imagination with their own literatures, scholarly investments, political agendas, leaders, theorists, and blind spots, which are too numerous to fully document. This section introduces their interlinking concepts of abolition related to culture, narrative, and notions of freedom.

Of the three, carceral abolition is the most extensively known. The prison abolition movement began in the 1980s, coinciding with the coinage of the prison industrial complex (PIC). Prison abolition is a large field with many different ideas and influences.[7] Its most visible scholars, for example, Angela Davis and Ruth Wilson Gilmore, have worked closely with groups such as Critical Resistance and authored key publications of the movement. Critical Resistance's mission is to abolish the PIC, "eliminating imprisonment, policing, and surveillance and creating lasting alternatives to punishment and imprisonment" ("What is the PIC? What is Abolition?" n.d.). More recent calls to "abolish ICE [Immigration and Customs Enforcement]" are, one scholar argues, a "natural extension of years of thoughtful organizing by a loose coalition of grassroots immigrant-rights groups" (Markowitz 2019, 131). Many write of "crimmigration" or the intersection between criminal and immigration law (132). Legal scholar Allegra M. McLeod (2015) describes the "prison abolitionist ethic" as a critique of human caging as a solution to social problems. This ethic "recognizes the violence, dehumanization, and moral wrong inherent in any act of caging or chaining—or otherwise confining and controlling by penal force" of human beings (1172). Despite the critique of human caging, incarceration abolitionists generally do not foreground the links to animal exploitation.

Fossil fuel abolition emerges from attempts by scholars, journalists, and activists to explore the links between the political economy of slavery and fossil fuel dependence. These writings focus on historical precedents, the audacity of imagination/perspective, and the limits of historical analogy. Journalist Chris Hayes (2014) argues in "The New Abolitionism" that averting planetary disaster

due to climate change is only possible if fossil fuel companies relinquish $10 trillion in wealth. The climate movement, in coalitions such as the *Keep It in the Ground* and *Extinction Rebellion*, and in hundreds of antipipeline and antifracking protests, are demanding that "an existing set of political and economic interests be forced to say goodbye to trillions of dollars of wealth" with no historical precedent other than abolition. Hayes continues, "There is absolutely no conceivable moral comparison between the enslavement of Africans and African-Americans and the burning of carbon to power our devices. Humans are humans; molecules are molecules. The comparison I'm making is a comparison between the political economy of slavery and the political economy of fossil fuel." Similarly, Eric Beinhocker (2019) argues that "science has given us a clear, specific rallying point. …We must abolish carbon. …The climate change movement must become a Carbon Abolition movement."[8] The current inability to imagine the end of carbon is similar to how it was simply unimaginable to conceive of a world without slavery (at least from the perspective of white people). Environmental historian Jean-François Mouhot demonstrates the links between the abolition of slavery and the Industrial Revolution and similarities between societies in the past that have used slave labor and those in the present that use fossil fuels. We are as dependent on fossil fuels as slave societies were dependent on bonded labor.[9]

Animal abolitionism, like fossil fuel abolitionism, draws upon the historical prologue to ending slavery in its call to eliminate harm to animals. Historically, the link between animals and slaves consisted in their shared dehumanization and in the legal relationship of animals and slaves as property. Legal scholar Gary Francione with co-author Anna Charlton, in *Animal Rights: The Abolitionist Approach* (2015), rejects an animal welfare approach in favor of a more radical conception that eliminates the framework of "concern" in favor of one based on rights.[10] But their approach has important limits, particularly in regard to race. Political scientist and animal studies scholar Claire Jean Kim (2018) argues that animal abolition conceptually "displaces the issue of black oppression" (18). She faults animal abolitionists for their lack of engagement with history, pointing out that enslaved peoples sought to "resuture" into humanization. In other words, animal abolition takes as its operating premise the putative resolution (the "problem solved" approach) of racial slavery as a problem of history (19). Kim draws on Afro-pessimists Frank Wilderson and Jared Sexton in recentering Black existence, the afterlives of slavery, and the foundational role of antiblackness in "repositioning" animal abolition within the larger abolition movement (29).

This repositioning of animal and fossil fuel abolition within the PIC abolition movement is not only possible, but necessary given the glaring whiteness of both animal and fossil fuel abolition. Rather than using the end of slavery as a triumphalist narrative that decenters the perspectives of those most impacted, abolition in a capacious sense can include ending the violence associated with carbon and animal death in equal measure within movements for freedom. Theorists and activists within the prisons/policing abolition movement center

the lives and perspectives of those most impacted and allow for a broad environmental politics that makes conceptual space for the more than human. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, a prominent Marxist associated with the prison abolition movement, argues for the central goal of freedom in the abolition movement as a wide-ranging one. She says, "we work the entire ecology of precarious existence that shapes, but is not bounded by, the aggrandizing 'criminal justice system,' including housing, jobs, education, income, faith, environment, status" (Gilmore and Kilgore 2019). In addition to pushing for concrete policy or movement demands, abolition is, thus, a capacious prefigurative practice that potentially creates alliances toward the goal of abolishing prisons and police and ending carbon and animal exploitation simultaneously.[11]

The centering of those most impacted and those least historically responsible is a key demand of the climate justice movement and, by extension, abolitionist climate justice ("Bali Principles of Climate Justice" 2002).[12] Geographically uneven productions of nature rooted in colonialism and capitalism shape the roots and consequences of climate change.[13] Numerous scholars discuss the globally uneven and racially disproportionate impact of climate change through colonial/postcolonial and environmental/climate justice lenses and examine how these might be addressed. Historian Dipesh Chakrabarty (2014) provides an overview of the collisions of "histories" of "the earth system, history of life, history of industrial civilization (mostly, capitalism)" (cf. Ghosh 2016; Klein 2014; Whyte 2018). Climate debt, he argues, is "a special case of environmental injustice where industrialized countries have over-exploited their 'environmental space' in the past, having to borrow from developing countries in order to accumulate wealth, and accruing ecological debts as a result of this historic over-consumption" ("Climate Debt: Making Historical Responsibility Part of the Solution" 2005). The broadest impacts of climate change are most devastating for the Global South and the poor, those historically the least responsible for carbon emissions.

Although these observations are not new, emergent scholarship is drawing out the abolitionist justice perspective in problem analysis and social movement responses to environmental problems. Philosopher Olúfẹ́mi O. Táíwò (2020) argues that "climate apartheid" is linked to the coming police violence crisis. Drawing on research on past disasters, he articulates the security strategy that seeks to make safe and stable spaces for the affluent that are "generated from the very insecurity that their policing creates for others." Legal scholar Nadia Ahmad (2020) likewise addresses the linkages between mass incarceration and human caging as similar responses to climate change and the coronavirus. She names "climate cages" as responses to "atmosphere dynamics (that) limit mobility, worsen prison conditions and increase carcerality" (although cages are not only literal, but refer to policing and caging in a broader sense of limits on freedom).[14] She points to three emancipatory movements that open these cages: fossil fuel divestment, prison abolition, and abolishing ICE. This scholarship takes the perspectives of those locked in the cages as its foundation and goes quite far in making more explicit the racial and global injustices of climate change.

Abolitionist Climate Justice Kinship

What does an abolitionist climate justice ethic look like in *The North Pole*? It begins with the title and central image of the show. The "North Pole" is a reference to the endangered Arctic as well as a specific neighborhood in Oakland that has faced gentrification. It connects the precarity of polar bears vulnerable to losing their homes (ice) to people of color losing their homes due to gentrification. For Black and Brown young people in Oakland, the most "gentrified city in the U.S.," vulnerability means gentrification and the policing that goes with it (Richardson, Mitchell, and Edlebi 2020). In the Bay Area, the Black population declined 43% in San Francisco and 40% in Oakland over the last three decades (Helpler 2020). Although a significant number left the Golden State for Nevada, Texas, or the South, a larger number went inland in search of more affordable housing in cities such as Stockton and Modesto. *The North Pole*'s signature image is a polar bear, an iconic symbol of global warming. The show takes an abolitionist climate justice perspective by rejecting anthropocentric notions of hierarchy. Rather, the show reveals and values connectedness between living beings.

The characters make this connection clear in the very first episode. *The North Pole* works and rewrites the conflation of nonwhite bodies with animals by linking Black and Latinx people with polar bears ("The Black Panther Party" n.d.). The first episode introduces Nina, Benny, and Marcus at home where they have received a massive rent increase. They document and narrate the signs of "ecosystem" change with their binoculars (yoga classes and overpriced hipster cafes). They drive around on the search for what they call a "rare sighting," the "majestic polar bear," a local born-and-bred resident of color who has yet to be priced and pushed out of their home. In their search to make the money to pay their rent increase, Marcus and Nina collect spare change with a bucket outside the local Whole Foods "for the polar bears." The polar bear begins as a metaphor for their own precarious status.

The notion that Black people—and Black young men in particular—are "endangered species" has a particular history. Psychology and counseling literature used this highly contentious connection in the 1980s (Knight 2014; Parham and McDavis 1987). Black comedians then popularized the frame (Patterson 2012).[15] The category of the human and processes of dehumanization/animalization can be understood through the historical experiences of racialized others in the United States, in particular African Americans and Native peoples. Racist conflation of nonwhite peoples/communities and animals has a long history. Political scientist Claire Jean Kim (2017) writes, "Blackness and animalness, then, form poles in a closed loop of meaning. Blackness is a species construct (meaning 'in proximity to the animal'), and animalness is a racial construct (meaning 'in proximity to the Black'), and the two are dynamically interconstituted all the way down" (10). Literary scholar Lindgren Johnson (2018) argues that African American literature reveals both the dangers and opportunities of closeness to nonhuman and nonhuman animal nature, calling this closeness "fugitive humanism" in the title of her book. Animal abolitionists argue that African American subjectivity, freedom, and

citizenship were intimately entangled with discourses of animality and animalization. In arguing for such intimacies in the relationship between Black people and animals, Johnson argues that African Americans also refused some of liberal humanism's most "cherished" assumptions of what constitutes shared goals of progress, specifically processes of "property making and property taking." This refusal is enabled through a framework of "shared vulnerability" of some African Americans with animals.

Nina, Marcus, and Benny's connection with polar bears is based (in part) on these notions of fugitive humanism and shared vulnerability. These connections are based on interspecies relations rather than human domination or hierarchy over nature and animals. *The North Pole*'s identification of Black people with the polar bear is understood in the series as a source of connection and solidarity in times in which people of color, indigenous communities, animals, and ecosystems face grave threats. The show makes this point about hybridity between different species a feature of climate change adaptation. Nina lectures her housemates about how climate change is impacting the habitats of polar and grizzly bears. She talks about "pizzly bears" that emerge when their habitats are threatened due to global warming (Milman 2016).

But, when Marcus and Benny talk excitedly about this adaptation to climate change, Nina makes clear that the polar bear's hybridity and adaptation is not to be romanticized, naturalized, nor inevitable. Rather, it is a by-product of pollution, extraction, and the political-economic search for endless capitalist growth, which push polar bears—and the main characters—out of their natural habitats or homes. Gentrification further weakens a sense of community and home and contributes to feelings of powerlessness that the characters express. In the penultimate episode of season one, "Spirit Animals," the life-sized polar bear becomes a character in the show. Before the polar bear speaks, he is a silent symbol for tragedy. That tragic polar bear is instantly belied once he talks. Polar Bear is voiced by Boots Riley, the well-known Black revolutionary and Bay Area local (Voynocskaya 2019). He says to Nina, "There won't be any of us left unless you fight against your apathy." He says, "I'm not going out like that. … And I would go 'beast' mode on these fossil fuel fools." She equivocates, saying, "I don't know what to do," to which he presses with urgency, "Who… are you?"

Rebellion (in the form of the polar bear) overcomes apathy (in Nina) by tapping into the stories of historical racialized rebellions that took place in Oakland. Nina calls an Uber to find her grandmother, a former Black Panther Party (BPP) member. Her grandmother, played by real-life BPP icon Erika Huggins, talks to Nina about the Panthers who rebelled against the racism in their city through a political program that sought to make conditions better. The Black Panther is itself another example of how radicalized Black people used an image of a powerful animal to make a political statement.[16] The grandmother admonishes Nina for her negative attitude, saying that problems such as "police and pollution" have to be countered with "a program and a vision that will lead people to walk with you."

The season finale, "Survival or Collapse," ends with the main characters joining a standoff at a house where a local elderly woman of color is being evicted due to a rent hike spurred by gentrification. By taking a stand against this police-aided eviction, Nina, Marcus, and Benny fight back against their own vulnerability and against losing their homes. The standoff is loosely based on the real-world actions of the "Moms 4 Housing" occupation and the subsequent eviction of four homeless mothers of color from an empty house in Oakland (Elassar 2020). These activists point to the problem of the housing market, in which a speculator boom displaced long-time renters and made houses a commodity rather than a human right to shelter. In Nina's rallying speech, she decries the forces of disrespect for the community: "Do we become toxic like Flint, flooded like New Orleans? They already got us on underwater mortgages. We are not for sale." As the police drive up with sirens, she takes the words of the (Rebellion) Polar Bear and her grandmother to ask of the crowd, "What you going to do?"

Nina's identification and ultimate kinship with the polar bear is what enables her to act against her own apathy and claim her home against displacement from a housing market based on ability to pay. The polar bear goes from a tragic symbol of climate change to a "beast," a kinship that enables Nina's transformation to an abolitionist activist who fights "fossil fuel fools," real estate speculators, predatory banks, and the police.

Abolitionist Climate Justice Against Deportation and Beyond Borders

When the show resumes in season two, we do not know if the direct action to stop the eviction "worked," but the audience does see the immediate consequences for the main characters. Season two links climate change, deportations, and global migrations as a way to further an abolitionist climate justice analysis of "home" and what home means in a context of war and climate change. Ultimately, the show threads these issues together to centralize an abolitionist critique of policing and deportation in tracing out what climate and social justice looks like for Benny and his friends.

As a result of the direct action, Benny, who is undocumented from Central America, is arrested and threatened with deportation. Benny is one of California's two million undocumented young people, subject to deportation, especially after an arrest. His stand at the eviction has a huge personal and individual cost. Benny's approach to his deportation order is that offense is the best defense, and publicity for his cause is that offense. He runs against the local sheriff seeking to deport him, thereby inverting the classic tale of the noble sheriff and the lawless criminal. The show relies upon and inverts these archetypes. As with the real-world undocumented activists who proclaim themselves "undocumented and unafraid" (Wong 2014), Benny takes his cause public with the help of Nina's social media activism on his behalf.

For Benny, Nina, and Marcus, the notion of home is what they are fighting to preserve and protect in their fight against gentrification and deportation.

This notion of home can be found in broad and expansive notions of family and community. One of the episodes recounts their first encounters as children. Benny's family was the first Latinx family on the block. Benny's arrival on the block does not signal Nina and Marcus' displacement because they share a working-class background. Significantly, Nina first spots (Rebellion) Polar Bear as a child in Benny's backyard. The series indicates that these expanded notions of kinship began decades ago as families and communities welcomed one another and remade working-class Oakland in ways that both honored Black communities and made space for other working-class people of color. These connections can be found in the characters' families and in their parallel struggles and experiences. Like Nina, Benny has radical elders in his family. His aunt and her wife are queer radicals who fought the military in El Salvador with the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front.

Like Nina in season one, Benny suffers moments of apathy and crisis when he doubts whether his campaign for sheriff is working. Benny's Tía Carmen speaks to him, pushes him to be strong by telling him that he must continue the journey of his ancestors. She helps him fight the demonizing voices of racists that are literally in his head. With her help, he is able to drown those voices out and connect the dots. In the finale, he says,

> Truth is, I didn't want to come here. None of us did. We were bleeding a civil war with bombs and bullets paid for by the CIA. You want to arrest someone, arrest the Salvadorean Army generals who firebombed their own town. Arrest Lockheed Martin who sold them weapons. Arrest the Ghost of Ronald Reagan. If you want us to stop invading your shores, stop invading ours.

The connections between U.S. foreign policy in Central America and corporate globalization leading to NAFTA are just some of the "push" factors that destabilized economies and homes throughout the Americas. Racist nativism is focused on defending home in a context that ignores the histories of U.S. violence over space and time.

Climate change, in the shape of massive hurricanes and mega droughts, is another "push" factor for migrations (Hallett 2019). Recent reports argue that the recent spike of migration from Central America is directly related to climate change (Sigelmann 2019). Climate refugees move globally in the world as a direct legacy of 400 years of modernity and development. The industrial food system similarly relies on the movement of farmworkers to follow crops, yet the idea of workers migrating over political borders remains anathema to racist nativists. Free trade agreements and industrial agricultural industries seek free borders for products and pollution while limiting protections for workers and the environment. However, justice movements take conditions of corporate and

government exploitation and politicize and collectivize them. Here again, critical consciousness and storytelling are keys to individual and collective action.

Benny makes his final pitch for sheriff in a livestreamed speech that narrates an abolitionist climate justice perspective on home and kinship from a global spatial perspective. He looks directly at the camera and says,

> As Tía Carmen likes to say, borders are the scars on Mother Earth. I'm a child of El Salvador and the U.S., but my world, my home is Oakland. … I'm an undocumented American… I'm not asking for your pity, forgiveness or even your money, I'm asking for more than your vote. I'm asking for your humanity. … Migration is a human right. … Truth is migration is natural… Monarch butterflies fly 3,000 miles every year from Mexico to Minnesota and back again. … I mean we are all just animals looking for a place to call home. And I found mine. I'm not a butterfly. I'm a polar bear. The North Pole, North Oakland. Originally and now, Ohlone Land.

In a context of extreme dehumanization of people of color in general and undocumented Americans in particular, he asks "for your humanity." But, beyond humanity, Benny describes that humanity in a world that is more than human when he says, "We are all just animals looking for a place to call home." He points out the absurdity of political borders when species migrate to survive.

His identification is not (only) with the butterflies, but with the polar bear. Benny connects his precarity to the endangered polar bear vulnerable to climate change, threatened to the point of extinction (Fountain 2020). Here, he is majestic and threatened, and now he is also ready to fight. His vision of home is not a narrow parochial one. By acknowledging Ohlone Land, his view of home centralizes indigenous histories and situates his migration stories with their struggles for sovereignty and land.

As in the last episode of season one, we do not know the "success" or outcome. The point of justice movements, rather, is in the fight itself and in the characters' shift in consciousness in order to take a direct stand against injustice. In the last scene of the series, shot and scored in a Spaghetti Western style, Benny faces directly against the sheriff, who seeks to enforce the deportation order. The show rejects dominant ideas of "the law" as enforcers of justice. The show invites the audience to identify with Benny the lawbreaker and all those who gather to stand with him. Crowds gather on both sides in a tense standoff. Finally, (Rebellion) Polar Bear joins Benny's side and says, "No Polar Bear is scared of fucking ICE. Na Bruh, not today," playing on the pun that polar bears are unafraid of ice (their home under threat) and ICE (which seeks to throw people out of their homes based on a paper and not their ties to the community). Polar Bear takes the deportation order from the sheriff and throws it back to the local "pyro" Bill, who grins and takes the order to burn it down.

This moment literalizes how climate change, deportation, and policing are connected as systems of violence to illustrate how they must be fought. On the one hand, the burning of the deportation order is a literal "burning down" of the system: ICE *will* melt when faced with principled resistance, whether that means direct action or noncompliance. The stability of ICE is based on the credibility of the system and ideologies that support it. That edifice is based on widespread consensus in the system, which can be withdrawn if enough people and organized interests come to see things differently—through social movements, legal fights, direct action, and, importantly, culture and narratives. At the same time, the polar bears face that the ice caps *are* melting due to climate change. The instability and the weakening of the ice shelf are also a product of a political system. The protection of the polar bear homes and habitats, likewise depends on people and interests—movements, law, direct action, and culture. In both the invocation that ICE *must* melt and that ice *is* melting, the show represents abolitionist climate justice politics against policing, deportation, and gentrification.

Abolitionist Care

The show dramatizes what can go horribly wrong when care for others is neglected. Nina's doubt and hesitation in the first season has entirely been replaced by a nonstop social justice stance as she finds her identity as an activist. At a fundraiser for Benny's campaign, she gives an impassioned speech about how ICE are modern-day slave patrols. She catches sight of Marcus collapsing from an asthma attack triggered by wildfires and made worse by climate change.[17] She notices Marcus' asthma attack when Polar Bear points to him from the back. Nina stops her speech and pulls him to a room with Benny and Finn. Even in this moment, Nina livestreams his asthma attack. While looking directly at the camera, she says, "First they poison our minds, then they poison our lungs… this hyper-capitalist system is literally choking us." Nina is so focused on capturing her critique and broadcasting Marcus' asthma attack that she focuses on the camera rather than her friend. The horror in the moment is compounded by her inability to focus on him as an individual at his most vulnerable. Her political consciousness and activism override a politics of care.

What Nina forgets in that moment is that the thing they fear losing most is their capacious notion of home, care, and community. After this moment, the characters reconnect in and through nature (in the woods, aided by psychedelics). The shock of Marcus' near-death experience is the catalyst for the main characters to take stock of their own struggles and doubts. Nina's go-to impulse in the woods (as in life) is to take a picture of the trees and to post on her journey. She starts making an impassioned speech about humans being part of nature when a talking tree cuts off her voice, imploring her to "listen" rather than make speeches. Marcus faces his asthma attack and starts talking to flowers. Finn confronts his racist parents. Each of the characters goes through their own epiphany, which the outdoors provides them. After their respective individual drug-aided insights that allow them to renarrate their own stories through their

doubt, they all make it back to the campsite. Significantly, Polar Bear finally makes himself seen to all of them. Before this moment, only Nina could see him. After they all gain an understanding of their seemingly individual problems and their roots and of how to maintain their sense of care and community through relationships with one another, they are transformed. They become like Polar Bear, ready for the fight against the big structures and histories that shape their precarity.

Their relationships based on care enable the abolitionist perspective on mutual aid and solidarity as a prefigurative politics to be explicitly articulated in the finale. Benny's final speech makes explicit that radical abolitionist vision based on care and solidarity. His vision is to abolish the police, to stop evictions and the deportation regime, and to reframe safety discourse from law and order to an emancipatory framework based on freedom from markets (high rents) and the state institutions (police-aided evictions) that serve them. Benny says,

> I say we call this town a real sanctuary. We abolish the sheriff's department and start our own thing. … Real sanctuary is… when my brothers can walk without fear of police… it's when no one gets evicted and no one gets deported. And we realize that the only way to survive is take care of one another. … But this is far greater than one politician. The only secure community is an organized one… we all feel hella isolated. And that is by design. When you feel alone, you feel that you can't do anything. I know I used to feel that way, but I don't anymore.

Benny references how he first felt alone and vulnerable and that the isolation and individualism is "by design." Abolitionist climate justice perspectives are communal, not individualized; care-driven, not market-dominant; and characterize home capaciously, not defensively. Beyond connection, Benny fights back with vision based beyond survival and grounded in care for each other in a current world that invites his removal and the deaths of polar bears from North Oakland to the North Pole. He moves toward an abolitionist vision of sanctuary through care, consciousness, and connection and away from isolation and fear. Strands of carceral, fossil fuel, and animal abolition are key components of *The North Pole*'s expansive vision of care, narrated from the perspective of the most vulnerable and impacted. Benny moves from an endangered polar bear as a figure of climate tragedy to Rebellion Polar Bear.

Conclusion

The search for walls and borders in the face of climate change-induced global migrations is a political fiction that imprisons some more than others. Ultimately, everyone on the planet is implicated in these interconnected systems of violence, environmental and otherwise. *The North Pole* models for its audience a process of how to take collective and direct action and to inhabit and

imagine an abolitionist perspective, broadly defined. Abolitionist climate justice narratives are rebellion stories that recognize the violence of modernity. They recognize why and how Black, Latinx, and Indigenous peoples have different and threatened relationships to home and why people of color within the Global North and from the Global South want to stay in place and are on the move at the same time.

What climate justice movements demand is that we make connections between animals, ecosystems, and prisons/policing/deportation violence to choose a path that is grounded in the service of intergenerational and interspecies justice. *The North Pole* makes these points in a way that connects with younger generations to enlist them in the abolitionist fight against fossil fuels, gentrification, policing, and deportation. It seeks to represent—and aims to enact through such representation—hopeful and humorous oppositional, cultural, and creative politics. It draws on capaciousness—vis-à-vis home with kin and nonhuman nature and over space and time—to develop a narrative of hope in a moment when the forces of capitalism, white supremacy, and carbon are both dominant and under attack. We are all always intimately interconnected through political and economic systems and through the ecosystems that support our life. What *The North Pole* reminds us of is that we can choose to be a Rebellion Polar Bear and live to fight another day.

Notes

1. Malini Ranganathan and Eve Bratman (2019) are the first to specifically use the term "abolitionist climate justice." Drawing on a case study in a majority Black neighborhood in Washington, DC, they rely upon Black radical traditions and feminist and antiracist scholarship to show how local community members reframe dominant notions of what they call "mainstream (climate) resilience thinking" (117). In contrast to policy-narrow descriptions of climate resilience, community members center intersectional justice approaches that foreground historical, ethical, and antiracist critiques of these practices. Key components of abolitionist climate justice are an understanding of the role of history, a focus on "re-humanizing" language and practices in the face of the historical dehumanization of Black communities and an ethics of care.

2. Each episode has a website accompaniment that highlights three "how to fight" or "learning more" tabs.

3. The Climate Justice Alliance is an "alliance of 70 urban and rural frontline communities, organizations and supporting networks in the climate justice movement. Member organizations lead the Climate Justice Alliance by anchoring major Just Transition projects focused on the social, racial, economic, and environmental justice issues of climate change. We are locally, tribally, and regionally based racial and economic justice organizations of indigenous peoples, African American, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and poor White communities, who share legacies of racial and economic oppression and social justice organizing" ("Our Team. Climate Justice Alliance" n.d.).

4. Movement Generation was founded by Bay Area community organizers of color heavily impacted by the racial and environmental disasters associated with Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans ("Mission and History" n.d.). Movement Generation mobilizes the climate crisis and climate emergency for justice-oriented action. Movement Generation's

"Arts and Activism for Climate Justice" portfolio brings "together cutting-edge artists and activists to creatively build a loud, proud, and beautiful *cultural front* for climate justice. We use arts and culture together with grassroots organizing to build our creative resistance and radical imagination for our peoples and the planet" (emphasis added) ("Culture Shift" n.d.).

5. One example is the musician and climate justice activist Xiuhtezcatl Martinez, who is currently a plaintiff in a youth-led lawsuit against the federal government for the government's inaction around the climate crisis and its failure to protect their essential public trust resources (Martinez 2020).

6. The Capitalocene, drawn from Marxist theorist Jason Moore's *Capitalism in the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital* (2015), argues that capital exploits labor and appropriates nature simultaneously. Thus, Moore contends, the climate crisis is also a crisis of capitalism, which the Anthropocene concept ignores. Indigenous philosopher Kyle Powws Whyte (2018) argues that dominant discourses of the Anthropocene deny indigenous realities and ignore that environmental crises are a result of settler colonialism and ongoing processes of political domination. Donna Haraway (2016) describes her "impatience" with the ways in which Anthropocene or Capitalocene have become analytically dominant, claiming that they focus on the technofix and employ a "too-late" analysis that lends itself to cynicism and nihilism. In *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene,* she situates the rise of Anthropocene analysis as obtaining "purchase in popular and scientific discourse in the context of ubiquitous urgent efforts to find ways of talking about, theorizing, modeling and managing a Big Thing called Globalization" (45).

7. The "Prison Abolition Syllabus" (2018) highlights how broad the field is.

8. He writes: "Pre-abolitionism, most white people viewed slavery as part of the 'natural order,' the great success of the abolitionists was exposing it as the moral abomination that it is. Other social movements, e.g., ending child labor, women's suffrage, civil rights, gay rights, democratic revolutions, and anti-war movements, have also had moral arguments at their core: The way things are is wrong and must change."

9. Legal scholar Karl Coplan (2016) is careful to lay out the moral distinctions and key differences between enslavement and fossil fuel. On civil rights as an imperfect analogy to the climate change movements, he writes, "The victims of climate injustice are by and large missing from the climate activists' demonstrations. These victims tend to be geographically and temporally remote from the U.S. climate activism community" (emphasis) (282).

10. On a blog, they maintain on the topic called "Animal Rights, The Abolitionist Approach," that logic endures as veganism (Francione and Charlton, n.d.).

11. Similarly, Critical Resistance answers the question of what abolition is, thus, "Abolition isn't just about getting rid of buildings full of cages. It's also about undoing the society we live in because the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) both feeds on and maintains oppression and inequalities through punishment, violence, and controls millions of people. Because the PIC is not an isolated system, abolition is a broad strategy. An abolitionist vision means that we must build models today that can represent how we want to live in the future. It means developing practical strategies for taking small steps that move us toward making our dreams real and that lead us all to believe that things really could be different. It means living this vision in our daily lives. Abolition is both a practical organizing tool and a long-term goal" ("What is the PIC? What is Abolition?" n.d.).

12. The Indigenous Environmental Network's "Indigenous Principles of Just Transition" are worth highlighting. Developed around the same time as the protests at Standing Rock, the principles are related to the Just Transition, climate, and environmental justice movements.

13. Until 1882, more than half of the world's cumulative emissions came from the United Kingdom alone. Since 1751, 25% of the world's historical carbon has been emitted by the United States, primarily in the last century (Richie 2019).

14. For Ahmad, her sources are both philosophical (Cicero) and lyrical. She uses song lyrics from 21 Savage, a rap artist who was arrested by ICE after he performed on national TV, with lyrics that criticized ICE, the lack of clean water and adequate energy access, and the access to justice for victims of the Flint water crisis.

15. These include comedian Chris Rock to D. L. Hughley in his 2012 special *The Endangered List*.

16. The Black Panther Party borrowed the Panther from the Lowndes County Freedom Organization in Alabama. It was first drawn by Ruth Howard ("Lowndes County Freedom Party (LCFP)" n.d.; "Ruth Howard" n.d.).

17. Asthma hits Black people particularly hard with devastatingly disproportionate hospitalization rates, three times higher death rates from asthma attacks for Black populations in general, and a ten times higher death rate for children ("Asthma and African Americans" 2021).

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