Editorial

THE SIX PAPERS in this second issue of the Journal are a diverse set of essays that examine the interrelationships between environmental epidemiology, "environmental competence," and land use planning in environmental justice struggles. These papers all provide commentary and recommendations on current and future public policies and planning approaches in ameliorating disparate environmental health risks typically faced by environmental justice communities.

Sacoby M. Wilson, Christopher D. Heaney, John Cooper and Omega Wilson's paper, "Built Environment Issues in Unserved and Underserved African American Neighborhoods in North Carolina," elucidates the perennial role that the built environment plays in environmental justice in the United States especially in southern African American communities. This paper describes diseases that continue to burden unserved and underserved communities of color in North Carolina. The authors use a case study of Mebane, North Carolina, to describe how neighborhoods of color in this small town have been impacted by environmental injustice through the denial built infrastructures despite their annexation to a municipality that was providing adequate water to nonminority and/or poor communities. Although the historical role of water infrastructures and environmental justice has been explored by other environmental scholars, this paper provides the readers with contemporary evidence of the persistence of inadequate built environments in the rural black communities in the southern United States and their roles in creating environmental health disparities. The authors provide recommendations on how future research should be structured to evaluate this phenomena and the type of public policies needed to ameliorate or eliminate this problem, including the development of "state revolving loan funds for the development of sewer/water grant programs to maintain and upgrade sewer and water infrastructures."

Thomas Sanchez and Marc Brennan's article, "Transportation Equity and Environmental Justice: Lessons from Hurricane Katrina," focuses on the development or lack thereof of transportation infrastructure in disaster-prone geographies that result in environmental and public health disparities for poor and minority communities. The authors point out the need for "disaster prevention" planning and the inclusion of "disaster-risk analysis" as part of "routine epidemiological analysis and systematic control and prevention . . ." They use Hurricane Katrina for their case study to show how the improper management of wetlands coupled with a lack of foresight by planners led to poor and minority communities being placed at inequitable environmental risks created by this disaster.

Sanchez and Brennan argue that "Disasters and terrorism happen. When they do, the nature of our social contract is such that they should not be allowed to adversely affect one group much more than another." They provide the reader with successful models of institutional response (i.e. US Coast Guard and the Salvation Army) to the disaster and how they differed from institutions (i.e. Red Cross) who could not respond as adequately to Hurricane Katrina.

Melissa A. Ahern and Michael Hendryx's paper, "Health Disparities and Environmental Competence: A Case Study of Appalachian Coal Mining" and Julien A. Terrel, Edith M. Williams, et al. paper, "The Community-Driven Approach to Environmental Exposures" discuss the critical role of environmental literacy among the medical and lay community in reducing environmental health risks in environmental justice (EJ) communities. Ahern and Hendryx cogently define and lay out the argument for "environmental competence" among health practitioners and how their competence can play a major role in identifying inequitable environmental health risks in EJ communities. They also discuss how environmental health literacy among both communities can and should play a major role in future environmental planning and policies. Using the latest quantitative study on the number of environmental toxicants (287) found in 10 babies randomly selected from US hospitals, the authors argue that the "snapshot of toxins in newborns is a reflection of growing ecological problems stemming from population growth and growth in per capita consumption of all types of consumer goods and services." In an increasingly complex world of ever-increasing environmental pollutants, the authors argue that health care providers are ethically bound to understand how these pollutants impact the health of their patients and the communities in which they live to help reduce health disparities. According to these authors, "Environmental competence can drive strategic planning to increase resilience in meeting future physical and economic environmental challenges."

The Terrell et al paper describes the power of "environmental competence" in EJ communities. This article describes how community members sought to understand and then eventually address the potential causal relationship of toxic waste in their community to a high prevalence of lupus among its members. The authors provide the readers with an overview of a community based participatory research (CBPR) effort between the University of Buffalo and the Toxic Waste Lupus Coalition and how this effort led to community members becoming active participants in a cleanup plan of a nearby toxic waste site. They argue that "Using CBPR to include the neigh-

borhood in research activities led to them making informed decisions when presented with remediation options . . . and in the eventual adoption of their selected cleanup measures."

Sofia Martinez's paper, "Color-Blind, Color-Mute and Color-Deaf, Race and Expertise in Environmental Justice Rule Making" gives an overview of EJ efforts in New Mexico by the New Mexico Environmental Justice Working Group (NMEJWG) within an overview of the historical EJ struggles in the United States. Martinez's paper elucidates how NMEJWG became involved and engaged in environmental policy discussions in the state and their success in having the concept of environmentally "vulnerable areas" being included in EJ discussions in the state. She provides a cogent description of "vulnerable areas" and describes how the "EJ community in New Mexico gained some regulatory victories . . . and some measure of justice for communities."

Zabihollah Yousefi's paper "A Survey of Pesticide Toxicant Utilization" in Iran provides a cogent overview and interpretation of the results of a quantitative environmental study of twelve cities in this country. The author provides results of study that examined the historical use and current level of environmental toxicants and their potential impact on human health. The essay discusses the dual roles of the built (inadequate drainage designs for

agricultural waste), natural environment (e.g. low water tables) and land use design in exacerbating and or ameliorating environmental health risks to the populations in these areas.

Joshua Palmer's book review of "Sick Building Syndrome and the Problem of Uncertainty: Environmental Politics, Technoscience, and Women Workers" should be significant to EJ scholars since it examines a study of a very controversial environmental health problem that is engendered not only by the population impacted but also by how it is and has been received by scientists and environmental policy makers.

Randel D. Hanson's review of "The Bridge at the Edge of the World: Capitalism, the Environment and the Crossing from Crisis to Sustainability" provides our readers with an overview of a new environmental study that looks at the fundamental role of capitalism and economic structures in creating environmental inequities and unsustainable communities across the globe. This review also synthesizes the major recommendations of the author for newer paradigms of ecological and economic interactions and relationships that can lead to environmental equity and sustainable societies worldwide.

—*Sylvia Hood Washington*
Editor-in-Chief