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## Editorial

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**Biographical notes:** Phillip L. Thompson is a Professor in the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Seattle University. He also serves as the Director of the Seattle University Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability. He teaches courses in Environmental Engineering and Economics and is the Faculty Advisor for Seattle University student chapter of Engineers for a Sustainable World. He attended the University of Iowa where he received his PhD and MS in Environmental Engineering and an undergraduate degree in biology. He is also a registered Professional Engineer in the State of Washington.

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In August 2016, attendees from around the world presented their work at the Seattle University Center for Environmental Justice and Sustainability's second, biennial conference *Just Sustainability: Hope for the Commons*. Since our 2014 meeting, we saw many positive environmental sustainability changes. The nations of the world came together on an historic climate agreement and our use of alternative energy continued to grow at an exponential rate. Here in Washington State our tribal and community leaders successfully blocked the construction of five coal and oil terminals and the voices of the people halted the exploration for Arctic oil.

In his 2015 encyclical, *Laudato si*, Pope Francis reminded us that environmental and social sustainability are inextricably linked. We must be less focused on consumption and more focused on care for each other and for the Earth. While there has been progress such as more Americans with health insurance, falling unemployment and more states increasing the minimum wage, we have much work to do to improve social sustainability. Demagoguery and fear have divided the US, and it continues to have thousands of homeless families while leading the industrialised nations of the world in child poverty.

This special issue begins with three papers in the area of sustainability education. First, Caughman explores the use of place-based learning for underrepresented groups studying science, technology, engineering and mathematics. She also presents results from separate case studies that integrate sustainability concepts with STEM curricula for populations of incarcerated students and Native American students, respectively. Next, Keller presents her study of how place-based curricula can help students feel more connected to a place in nature while making them more likely to advocate for the sustainability of that place. In her paper on sustainability education, Plevin argues that just sustainability curricula should include the challenging topic of modern slavery and that doing so provides an activist voice for the enslaved that can lead to positive change.

This issue further explores environmental justice in the areas of policy, the arts and in student development. In *Greening the debate*, Barratt identifies the attributes of

successful environmental justice advocacy campaigns and explains why others have been less effective at translating public sentiments into public policy. In their paper, Hauk and Kippen address environmental justice via the lens of socially conscious, arts-based education where they bring together several transdisciplinary approaches including climate justice and systems thinking. In the area of student development, Wells evaluates the validity and reliability of the just sustainability inventory which is a new instrument that was developed to measure the attitudes of college students within the frameworks of the sustainability and environmental justice movements.

Our special issue concludes with a focus on nature and conservation. In 'Extinction and democracy: wildness, wilderness, and global conservation', Lambacher argues that the concept of wildness must be retained as a distinct aspect of conservation in order to maintain the vital connection between humankind and the nonhuman other. In his paper, Hainze further explores how religious and scientific philosophies converge to enhance our moral considerations for and attitudes toward other species. Finally, Phan and Hy use the lens of psychology to understand barriers for water conservation programs. Each of these papers seeks a just sustainability that ensures the well-being of humans and nature. I hope that you will enjoy reading this truly interdisciplinary volume.