



**NIHCM**  
FOUNDATION

## Environmental Health: Air Pollution, COVID-19 & Health Disparities

### SPEAKER BIOGRAPHIES

(In order of appearance on the program)

**Cait Ellis, MPA** is a Program Manager for the National Institute for Health Care Management (NIHCM) Foundation in Washington, D.C. In this role, Ms. Ellis conducts research and analysis to inform and improve management strategies for health care leaders in the public and private sector. She also provides support for NIHCM's broad programming portfolio, including webinars, data visualizations, events, grants and awards. Ms. Ellis works across a wide range of topics, including the opioid crisis and mental health, rural health, and maternal and child health.

Prior to joining NIHCM, Ms. Ellis held several political and nonprofit internships and fellowships. Originally from California, Ms. Ellis received her Master's in Public Affairs with a concentration in Policy Analysis from the School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University, Bloomington, and she holds a BA in Politics from Willamette University.

**Charles Lee** is widely recognized as a true pioneer in the arena of environmental justice. He was the principal author of the landmark report, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States*. He helped to spearhead the emergence of a national environmental justice movement and federal action including the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit, Executive Order 12898, EPA's Office of Environmental Justice, National Environmental Justice Advisory Council (NEJAC), and the Federal Interagency Working Group on Environmental Justice.

Mr. Lee is currently the Senior Policy Advisor for Environmental Justice at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). He led the development and implementation of EPA's agency-wide environmental justice strategic plans, e.g., Plan EJ 2014 and EJ 2020. He has served in multiple capacities, ranging from creating the United Church of Christ's environmental justice program to directing EPA's environmental justice office. He was a charter member of the NEJAC, where he chaired its Waste and Facility Siting committee, as well as serving on the National Academy of Science/Institute of Medicine Committee on Environmental Justice and numerous other panels. In these capacities, he led efforts to incorporate environmental justice into EPA's rulemaking process, develop models for collaborative problem-solving, transform brownfields redevelopment into a community revitalization paradigm, advance approaches to address cumulative risks and impacts, lay a strong science foundation for integrating environmental justice into decision-making, and advancing environmental justice at the state level. A major focus of his current work is building long-term capacity to advance environmental justice at the state level.

Mr. Lee has authored numerous papers, reports, journals and articles on environmental justice over the past three decades. He has taught or presented at numerous schools

and conferences, including the seminal academic conference on “Race and the Incidence of Environmental Hazards” at the University of Michigan. He is the recipient of many awards for his work, including the American Public Health Association’s first Damu Smith Environmental Achievement Award. EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy presented to him the EJ Pioneer Award on the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of Executive Order 12898. In February 2017, the 122<sup>nd</sup> Session of the South Carolina House of Representatives passed Resolution H\*3732 to honor his lifetime of accomplishments in environmental justice and contributions to bettering the lives of communities in that state.

**Jeremy S. Hoffman, Ph.D** is the Chief Scientist at the Science Museum of Virginia and Affiliate Faculty in the L. Douglas Wilder School of Government and Public Affairs and the Center for Environmental Studies at Virginia Commonwealth University. Dr. Hoffman has served as a member of the Environment Committee for the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago, a Science Communication Fellow for the Oregon Museum of Science and Industry and the Mitchell Hamline School of Law, and was recently honored as one of Richmond's Top 40 Under 40 and one of the Grist 50 Fixers for 2020.

**Valerie Stewart, MBA** is the Director of Healthy Communities at the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation, Valerie focuses on strengthening multi-sector partnerships to advance health equity where communities are inclusive of lived experience and can create the conditions to be healthy. She leads grantmaking to strengthen nonprofit infrastructure and collaborative networks that build community power and voice. Her previous roles include fundraising in the nonprofit sector, consulting for quality improvement and corporate communications. Valerie earned her undergraduate degree in communications from Butler University (Indianapolis) and an MBA from the Kenan-Flagler School of Business at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill. She loves to spend time outdoors with her twin sons and new puppy, and her self-care includes running, reading and organizing.

**Josie Williams** is the Executive Director for the Greensboro Housing Coalition (GHC), a leading housing advocacy nonprofit in Greensboro, NC. Josie joined GHC in 2016 as Director of Community Engagement for the community-centered health partnership Collaborative Cottage Grove. She quickly distinguished herself as a compassionate, strategic leader and aimed to work with residents and a cross-sector collective of organizations to create a positive sustainable impact in underserved communities. She is a Greensboro native and developed her passion for community and addressing social determinants of health from personal experience with housing insecurity. Prior to working at the Greensboro Housing Coalition, she worked for the United Planning Organization in Washington, DC as an Advocacy Specialist. Currently, Josie is working towards completing a Master’s in Public Affairs at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Williams has been honored for her work with a number of awards and recognition, among them the 2019 Sojourner Truth Award, which is the Greensboro Club of The National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women’s Club’s (NANBPWC) highest Recognition, and is given to a woman whose life parallels the life and qualities of Sojourner Truth; the 2018 National Grassroots Policy and Community Engagement Award from Communities Joined in Action; and the 2016 Justice and Policy Studies Community Service Award from the Justice and Policy Department at Guilford College. She is also the State Chair of the Cooperative Extension at NC A & T State University’s Strategic Planning Council and has recently been appointed as a member of the NC Institute of Medicine, a distinguished group of more than 150 health and policy leaders in North Carolina.

Josie is skilled at building bridges of communication and engaging community members, nonprofit, government and health system organizations in developing equitable strategies and solutions to address social drivers of health. She believes in an authentic collaborative process where resident voice is prioritized.

Her unique perspective allows her to function as a bridge, connector and interpreter for the many individuals and organizations seeking both equitable process and outcomes.