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From the Editor

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NURSING AS A COMMUNITY WITHIN COMMUNITIES

Even though nursing's theoretical tradition has focused on individual care, nurses historically have been at the heart of various kinds of communities. Early in the 20th century, nurses in the United States formed groups focused on specific community projects and were instrumental in developing public health services for inner-city populations. They were influential in political activism related to rights of women to vote, government health care services for children, and involvement in the European wars. This tradition has continued throughout the decades, and yet the perception persists among most nurses that our tradition is one of individual isolation, of political apathy and a predominant focus on services to individual patients in hospitals.

The articles in this issue of *Advances in Nursing Science* (ANS 23:2) dispel various myths that have prevailed concerning the nature of nursing's own community and our activism within the larger populations and communities we serve. This issue provides important foundations for building a new understanding of nursing's potential for creating health in communities and systems. The reviewers' comments give a glimpse of what is in store in this issue:

* Stevens: "... presents a compelling critique of the current welfare reform systems and challenging arguments to mobilize the nursing citizenry to action on behalf of the poor."

* Rubotzky: "Although I have used *Nursing's Agenda for Health Care Reform*, I was unaware of the efforts behind the scenes which led up to its publication, and this history makes an important contribution to nursing knowledge."

* Rafael: "The application of nursing theory and nursing science to the understanding of communities is difficult at best, and I believe this article provides a new perspective."

* Westbrook and Schultz: "... provides the reader with an explanation of the development and organization of interdisciplinary neighborhood teams and their use of the core functions of public health to guide efforts to address community-

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identified problems. This is the cutting edge of the future practice of public health nursing and it is a true service to make this story available in ANS."

* Marck: "The integration of theory and nurses' stories throughout the text provides a sense of being in the moment as one ponders the need for nurses to restore our 'right' ecological relationships to health, clients, other health professionals, and the larger world."

* Scott: "Well articulated and important implications for research and practice."

* It is my hope that these articles will provide a beacon of light toward forming new kinds of communities among nurses, focused on making a real difference in the communities we serve.

-Peggy L. Chinn, RN, PhD, FAAN

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