

BALLARD STORY COMPETITION

Vote for your favorite story.

Do you have a desire to change the world but don't know where to start? Read the stories of five [BYU Ballard Center for Social Impact](#) students to learn more. Students from a variety of majors and backgrounds describe their journeys, impactful insights, and passions for social change. You can read more stories by following the hashtag [#BallardLove](#) on social media.

[Back](#)



From Blindness to Sight: Seeing Social Problems with 20/20 Clarity

I've been to a lot of parties, but I've only been to one where I found out I was virtually blind in one eye. When I was about five years old, my brother had a pirate-themed birthday party, and when my mom came to put on my pirate eye patch, I told her to put it over my left eye, because if she put it over my right one, I wouldn't be able to see.

This launched me into years of eye doctor appointments, wearing patches (over my good eye this time), and getting used to glasses. Now, I sport one, discreet contact in my left eye, and I can see clearly. Because the world used to be half blurry to me, I know firsthand the beautiful clarity that comes with being able to truly see.

This grapple with vision problems was one of many contributors to my interest in social issues. Specifically, I care about helping people see, not just physically but emotionally and mentally as well; seeing people deeply; and understanding how the social issues they face inhibit, change, and shape the world they live in.

Fast forward to my BYU experience, where I was one of those classic had-heard-of-the-Ballard-Center-but-hadn't-gotten-involved-yet sorts of people. At one point, I saw a job posting for a position with [Ballard Brief](#)—the Ballard Center's social issue research publication. Here it was! A chance to work and write for a program all about helping people truly see and understand social issues.

The Ballard Brief program itself seeks to solve a social problem: the spread of misinformation and disinformation. We do this through helping students research and write about current social issues to create a library of "Ballard Briefs", and we ensure the use of credible sources to provide information about the context, contributing factors, consequences, and practices relevant to these social issues. Much like being half-blind prevented me from fully seeing, misinformation and disinformation hide the whole picture and often lead to ineffective policies or practices that don't get down to the roots of the social issue.

Writing my own brief while working for the program has taught me that with accurate information comes more complete understanding. For example, by researching the plight of refugees in Europe, I've realized they face complex administrative obstacles that contribute to their inadequate resettlement. I've also learned about the disparities in socio-economic opportunities between refugees and natural-born citizens. Now that I better understand their situation, I have more confidence contributing to the conversation about current practices to rectify it.

The Ballard Brief program has pushed me as a writer, editor, thinker, researcher, and human being to not just look outside myself, but really see others through learning more holistically about what they struggle with and experience, be they refugees across the ocean or individuals in my own neighborhood.

My left eye may forever make things slightly blurry, but every day with Ballard Brief, my social issue vision gets closer and closer to 20/20.

JENNA VASQUEZ

1045 Votes

Voting has ended

Copy the link below to share this entry

<http://wshe.es/CtNTzzR> Copy

[Send](#)

[Share](#)

[Tweet](#)