My personal and professional lives have involved a passion and dedication to diversity and social justice-related work. At Ball State, I have had the privilege to promote social justice and diversity through my work for the Center for Peace and Conflict Studies (CPCS). For two years, I facilitated monthly discussion series events for the campus and community where speakers addressed specific topics (interfaith dialogue, feminist intersectionality, and sex trafficking, to mention a few). I have also organized larger scale events, including Dance for Peace, the Cohen Peace Conference, and the Relay for Nonviolence. Dance for Peace was an event where students watched and learned cultural performances and concurrently realized how dance is interpreted and used in many different cultures. I also helped organize the inaugural Cohen Peace Conference, which involved over 200 local, national, and international attendants who promoted nonviolence in the USA and abroad. Relay for Nonviolence, an inaugural event, involved approximately 100 participants who walked in honor of victims of violent tragedies.

Additionally, I have been an active member of Ball State University’s Social Justice League (SJL) and the Diversity Seminars at the College Counseling Center, which have allowed me to learn about systems that perpetuate unfair practices. As an active member of the Sexual Threats and Oppression Prevention (STOP) team, I have helped raise student, staff, and faculty awareness of sexual assault. As the co-President of the Community Outreach Team at BSU’s Practicum Clinic, I dispersed awareness of the clinic in the community in order to serve individuals with a need for services regardless of background and to empower people by providing the means and skills to learn to help themselves. Through research endeavors about sport for peace and microaggressions against people with disabilities, I have been able to advocate for change on a macro level.

Through my social justice efforts, I promote awareness, facilitate interaction, and
Tacianna Oliver  
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encourage discussion of difficult topics. Attendance at CPCS events has grown since my involvement with the center. Hundreds of students, staff, faculty, and community members continuously share that they learn a significant amount about the specific topic and most importantly, have a plan for action to facilitate positive change at home and/or abroad. On a more macro level, I hope that my research efforts will help supplement the body of existing research on unfair treatment of people with disabilities, subsequently making a direct impact.

My eclectic efforts in addressing social justice issues have significantly impacted my personal development. As a student, I am constantly learning how to apply literature to action. As a citizen, I have considered myself an advocate and ally for many years, but only through the past two have I been able to integrate those characteristics into my identity. As a leader, I feel very empowered to facilitate change on both micro and macro levels. I have learned to manage others, coordinate large-scale events, and most importantly, transform ideas into meaningful events. I am on my way to truly understanding the meaning of advocating, even if advocating for something I firmly believe involves conversations that might be perceived as negligible.

I am absolutely committed to a lifetime of diversity-related work. I have learned to successfully promote awareness, and my next goal is to facilitate action after knowledge and awareness are gained. I plan to translate awareness into a desire to take action by obtaining feedback on the barriers between knowledge, the plan/desire to take action, and actually taking action. This summer, I am teaching Conflict Resolution through the TeenWorks Youth Employment and College Readiness program, which will help students promote nonviolence. I am also planning on working with men and women who have been sex trafficked in Indianapolis. My passion for social justice is unquenchable and I will continue promoting an environment that celebrates diversity throughout my life, both on personal and professional levels.