

District 97 Board Members:

As you know, Oak Park filmmaker Steve James and myself have been producing a documentary miniseries, "To Bridge the Divide" this school year at Oak Park and River Forest High School focusing on race, equity and achievement. In the film, we are profiling numerous students and their families. Bing Liu, one of our four filmmakers, is following freshman Grant Lee, Miles Lee's son. Miles is a fifth grade teacher at Longfellow Elementary. Grant is an excellent student, who credits his dad with instilling a love of academics and a strong academic work ethic. Miles is such a committed teacher--staying after hours and working on weekends to make his lesson plans, grade papers, and prep for upcoming classes. Our hope is to make Miles' influence on Grant even more clear by seeing him at work.

Therefore, we would like to request filming Miles during one school day at Longfellow. Ideally, we would greatly prefer "option one" because it bests shows how Miles engages with his students, and his commitment to being an excellent teacher. Option two makes the filming far less personal and engaging. Option three doesn't allow us to see Miles actually teaching students.

OPTION ONE:

- Filming Miles during a normal class day, showing him teaching and interacting with students. We are happy to work with Administration with obtaining permissions from student parents. Typically, in journalism and documentary films, if the student does not have a substantial presence in the scene, then a release would not need to be obtained. (For example, when local television stations film in schools, releases are not obtained for students.) We are currently shooting in many classrooms at OPRF high school and have worked out an excellent protocol with the OPRF Administration where parents are notified via email that we will be in the classroom. If they do not wish their son or daughter to be filmed, we identify them and do not show them in our shots. Thus far only a few parents have opted out in the many classes we are filming in. We can completely work around those who do not want to be filmed. In addition, we would want to film Miles after school grading and preparing for the next school day.

OPTION TWO:

- Filming Miles during a normal class day. Shoot from back of room only to show the backs of students heads. In addition, we would want to film Miles after school grading and preparing for the next school day.

OPTION THREE:

- Only filming Miles after school grading and preparing for the next school day.

Lastly, we want to make clear that we always aim to be as discrete and unobtrusive as possible when filming in class. Our crew consists of three people, only two of which need to be in the class if necessary. We don't set up lights interrupt the class in any way. We've been filming at the high school now for six months and not one teacher has complained about our presence. In fact, teachers find that the classes tend to be better on days we film because students are more engaged!

Thank you very much for your consideration. We truly believe that if we are able to capture Miles' day fully, it will be an important part of our film, and the story of this inspiring family.

Best regards,

John Condne – Series Producer
Steve James – Series Director
Bing Liu – Director/DP