Title of Project: Fly the Eagles in Liangshan
Country of project implementation: China
Sponsoring College: International House NY
Designated Project Leader: Bohao Liu

Section I: Narrative

a. A two-sentence summary of the goals of your project

This project aims to rebuild a basketball court for a remote village in Liangshan Yi Autonomous
Prefecture, Sichuan, China and provide training and reflection sessions to the kids inspired the spirit
of basketball: Mamba mentality. The goal of this peace education program is to improve the well-being
of the next generation in this problematic and impoverished region.

b. Did other fund-raising efforts contribute to your project? What were they?

This project was totally funded by Projects for Peace and no other fundraising was needed.

c. How did you come up with the idea for your project?

This project was inspired by Kobe Bryant, “coaching the young kids is the most important thing you can
do.” I established the link with the documentary subjects last year and was passionate for what he was
doing to spread the basketball culture in the mountains. I decided to join his team during this summer
and recreate the basketball court that was shown in the my last documentary.

d. Why do you think the issue your project is responding to exists?

Poverty was caused by the social issues in Liangshan. The government’s plan to complete the
eradication of rural poverty by 2020 made all villagers live together in an apartment complex. But
besides the improvement of living condition, it is urgent to get rid of drugs, AIDS, illiteracy, gender
inequity, child labor, and migrant workers, starting from changing the young generations. If not the
only, sports and especially their favorite basketball can be the possible remedy for each individual and
for the community.

e. Why did you choose your host site to work in?

Sometimes a real story can develop more surprisingly than a fiction. After I left the village last year, my
partner became famous and received more help to achieve his own goals. He started to run a basketball
court in the center of town and provide free basketball training to the kids from the mountains. His
training camp became the safest and most convenient choice for us to hold the training and reflection
sessions during the rainy season.

f. What was it like to work in your host site?

Returning to the village and working at the new Eagles Camp was another rewarding experience. First,
I saw the kids more familiar as I have seen their faces in the editing room for the whole last year. Every
training session was moved to the morning instead of afternoon during this summer. The kids started
with a series of basic trainings such as dribbling, passing shooting, and layup with two coaches. And for
another one-hour reflection session discussing the training and the life of the week. The kids are willing
to share new gains on court and off court, with a total admission of more than 40 kids between June and
August. On the game day, the kids formed a team and played against a team from the town. The
summer camp wrapped up successfully though they lost the game.

We finally went to Boluo village 24 miles away from Ganluo county to rebuild the old court. It was planned on a sunny day but it started to rain when getting darker. We managed to finish the replacement in one day and paint the court the next day. Boluo was a village without a decent court while most of the kids had to travel to Ashamo 10 miles away. We provided them with a closer choice to play basketball.

**g. Did you feel at any point that the project was not going to work? In what ways?**

The point which hindered us was the choice of venue that we had a limited budget to carry the necessary materials for rebuilding a full court deep in the mountains. The expensive cost of transportation to the village and the human resource was not taken into consideration. But fortunately, my partner had a newly built basketball camp and we finally compromised to replace the old basketball stand with a new one.

**h. What were the challenges you encountered in communicating with people?**

I do not speak the local language but my partner helped me greatly. And because I knew the locals from last year, I was treated like a returning friend. But, while we replace the stand on a raining day, the bureaucracy stopped our work for their safety consideration. We argued for the purpose of donation and the fact the family accepted the donation. The local officials allowed us to continue the replacement before they and we made a bunch of calls.

**i. How do you define peace?**

Peace is a state of mind, and of the community. I believe the spirit of sports can encourage an individual's pursuit of peace, and eventually the community. Peace is a generational thing so that to establish a new starting point is never too late. The peace for the next generation is the ultimate goal of this project. Peace reassures us to be better, with the spirit of perseverance, until the best we can be.

**j. How does or will your project contribute to peace? Short-term? Long-term?**

The new court at least provides the kids with a better and safer place to play basketball. Basketball is always charismatic and inspiring for the long-term peace due to the impact during their childhood. Instead of falling into the cycle of problems, they are provided with basketball court and gear as a choice and a way of thinking of the world with the spirit they learn from sports. “Coaching the young kids is the most important thing you can do.” I think this is just a start of my future film plan in Liangshan.

**k. Has your project changed the way you think about the world? How has it changed you?**

It is always life changing when step into the mountains and working with the kids. I did a thing right which I am so pound of: the story I have told and the court I have actually built for the kids. When I took the 16-hour bus to the cliff village and then climbed to the top, when I set up the stand and draw the lines in the rain, “this is actually the dream.” I understand what Kobe means by actually doing it. This is beyond film and basketball but at the same time from these things I am passionate for. I think I am proud of being part of the Eagles, because we are rewarded for doing what we love. Sometimes I was distracted by the many choices. The stay in Liangshan reminds me of inner peace, to focus on one thing and do it right.
1. Was your project impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic? a. If yes, please describe any impacts you and/or community members engaged in your experienced. b. How did you advance your projects goals despite these challenges?

The site where we held this program had little impact from the pandemic and we followed the travel and local safety protocols.

m. What advice would you give to future PfP grantees given the pandemic-related challenges you experienced?

China implements a zero-tolerance policy to COVID-19 so if one stayed in a place where a case was detected, their next plan would be seriously affected.

“If one day I lost myself, I would come back to this court and play basketball with the kids. Surrounded by the green, listening to the symphony of the wind and river, making that shot, I know the peace I give, and I know the peace I have.”