Background
Liangshan Yi Autonomous Prefecture is one of the poorest regions in China. Millions of Yi people live here and they consider themselves as the descendants of eagle. Last summer, I came here to film my thesis documentary and I stopped at a village halfway up the mountain. Before 2017, villagers lived in a scattered manner with their own herds and fields. The government’s plan to complete the eradication of rural poverty by 2020 made all villagers live together in an apartment complex. There are still so many social issues, drugs, AIDS, illiteracy, gender inequity, child labor, and migrant workers. But I found a story of the possible remedy.

There is a basketball court at the center of the apartment complex. It becomes the place for the kids playing basketball. Amu, 22, is a native of this village and a fan of Kobe Bryant. He started playing basketball at the age of eight, when his mom passed away. He went to Chengdu for vocational school to be a car mechanic because his father wanted him to stay in the city. But after two months of work, he decided to come back and coach the kids and hold games in the prefecture’s every village. “Not every village has a court,” said Amu. He thus wanted to bring basketball to every village by building a court and providing gear and training to the kids. I am a fan of Kobe and a believer of his Mamba Mentality as well. I got impressively inspired and decided to continue this basketball project along with Amu this summer.

Description of the Project
The village without a standard court is in Ganluo county, 10 miles away from Amu’s home. I will give out basketball gear, build a court, hold 8 weekly trainings, and host a game for the kids. Kobe’s Mamba Mentality is the power that drives me and the spirit which I want to bring to the kids. “We don’t quit, we don’t cower, we don’t run. We endure and conquer.” Kobe explained. Born and raised in the tough environment in Liangshan, the kids find basketball as a dream lighting up their future. They might not become a professional player eventually but they will learn what basketball teach them, “endure and conquer.” This project will provide the kids with necessary gear and place, and thus expose them to the lessons of Mamba Mentality and help them live strong for a better future.

The court they have now is to be precise a stand on a muddy ground. And the board of that stand is just a half of a ping-pong table. To build a standard court, we will pave the ground even with concrete and buy two basketball stands. The measurement and lineation will be done by a professional team. Most of the kids could not afford a pair of sneakers so they wear sandals playing basketball, not to mention other gear. The gear such as sneakers, jersey, protective equipment can offer them a safer training and play. During the 3-month summer break in Liangshan, the kids help their parents do farm work. After 4 o’clock, they have time for a three-hour training and practice until 8. Amu will be the coach to teach them basketball, from basics to tactics. After 8 weekly trainings, we will divide the kids into two groups for a game. Winning the game is set as a goal for their training to achieve and let them understand the beauty of competition. The winning team will get a small reward. If basketball can help this generation in Liangshan conquer the devastating social issues such as drugs and child labor and poverty, what this project determines to achieve is the definition of peace.

Participants and Activities
24 students in the village in Ganluo will be selected to join this 8-week training and be given basketball gear on the first day. These students will be selected from an age range from 9-12 by a one-on-one game. Basketball experience is not required but the selected kids need their parents or grandparents’ permission to join. Amu will help the advertising process by calling the village’s committee and visiting family by
family to ask for permission. Meanwhile, the professional team will pave the ground and build a basic standard court.

On the new court, the training is divided into two parts, practical and reflection. The practical part is 3 hours long and the reflection is 1 hour. In the practical session, they will start with basics such as dribbling, passing shooting, and layup. The kids will then have the chance to team up for practice games. The reflection, led by me and Amu, will spark the conversation about that week’s life of the reflection of that day’s training. On the last game day, we will invite their family members to watch the game.

Schedule
- May 15th – May 30th: building a court and distribution of gear
- May 31st – July 25th: eight weekly training
- July 26th – July 30th: preparing for the game
- July 31st: the game

Goals and results
The goal of this game is to get the kids exposed to basketball and to spread Mamba Mentality in this mountain village. I believe that the spirit of Kobe will inspire them not only in basketball but also in their life and study. I want basketball to teach them perseverance and teamwork. I want to give them an unforgettable summer and leave there a court. They will have their own basketball and sneakers. I hope that one of the results is that they can enjoy playing basketball after their farm work. I hope they can jump higher as their totem eagles. I hope they can dream something wonderful and achieve it as they win the game. I want them to remember the legend, Kobe Bryant, and to endure.

Indicators of Success
The land we use for the court was one of the villagers, Yi Mo’s backyard. He has already agreed to renovate this court but we need his feedback after the project. The game is the final showcase for their basketball skills, which is not the most important thing. As a journalist and media practitioner, I will report this beautiful basketball story to attract more attention. I will make a short documentary to record this whole process and consult NBA’s public relation. Moreover, this project has an opportunity to reach out to more village in Liangshan if we gain media coverage and public attention. The game day is not the final day. It is the start of Amu’s new journey and nevertheless, I hope this basketball summer camp can take place every year in more and more villages in Liangshan. Kobe said after his retirement, “coaching the young kids is the most important thing you can do.” The peace for next generation is what we can make now.