Memorandum

Zulu Dreams: From Apartheid to the Ivy League

TO	Prospective Investors
FROM	Richman Bongani Mahlangu
SUBJECT	*Zulu Dreams: From Apartheid to the Ivy League*, an autobiographical feature film. Request for pre-production support.

Dear Prospective Investor,

In 1978, a barefoot boy in the township of Lamontville, South Africa, spent his afternoons hitting a tennis ball against a wall with a racket that had broken strings. That boy was me. Today I am a school counselor in Las Vegas, the author of two books, and the proud father of a Harvard graduate and a Georgetown graduate. Together with Las Vegas filmmakers Ron and Michelle Ray of RR Film Production, I am bringing that journey to the screen. I am writing to invite your support for the film's pre-production phase.

The story

My name is Richman Bongani Mahlangu. I was born in Durban and grew up in Lamontville. One afternoon, a British professional tennis coach named Tim Gray, who was living in South Africa at the time, stopped to talk with me. He offered me an opportunity that changed the course of my life: I could become his ball boy at his Saturday morning clinics for white children in the city, and in exchange, he would give me a half-hour private lesson.

That was the start of my tennis career. Competing under TASA, the non-white tennis association, I became South Africa's number-one junior player in every age group I entered: boys 14-and-under, 16-and-under, and 18-and-under. I lost only one match in my entire junior tournament career.

In 1986, tennis brought me to the United States on a full athletic scholarship to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV). There I met my teammate Patrick, whose parents, Joan Kilburn and Jim Lang, managed the Bourbon Street Hotel Casino and the Royal Hotel Casino in Las Vegas in the 1980s. When Joan and Jim learned about my financial situation, they invited me to live in their home rent-free. Their generosity gave me the stability to complete my bachelor's degree and my master's in Educational Psychology. They later sponsored my green card and helped me become a United States citizen. Their extraordinary kindness is the heart of the story we want to bring to the screen.

In 1992–1993, tennis took me on the ATP Tour as the hitting partner of Horst Skoff, the Austrian Davis Cup player who reached a career-high ATP ranking of No. 18 in 1990.

Tennis went on to shape my family's story. I coached both of my sons, Nicholas and Yannik, and their success in tennis led to their recruitment by Harvard and Georgetown. Nicholas graduated from Harvard in Computer Science and works for a technology company in New York City. Yannik graduated from Georgetown and founded a wealth management company in New Jersey. Today, I serve as a school counselor for the Clark County School District at Mojave High School in Las Vegas.

I chronicled this journey in my autobiography, *Zulu Dreams: From Apartheid to the Ivy League*. I later published *Success Beyond Expectations: Dreams Without Action Become Pipe Dreams*, a self-help guide that outlines nine steps for young people pursuing their goals. Both books are available on Amazon.

The film and the filmmakers

Ron and Michelle Ray of RR Film Production are adapting *Zulu Dreams* as a feature film. Their most recent film, *Trees of Peace*, was released worldwide on Netflix.

For the roles of Joan Kilburn and Jim Lang, Ron and Michelle envision actors such as Meryl Streep and J. K. Simmons. No casting commitments have been made at this stage.

What we are seeking

We are raising **$150,000** for the film's pre-production phase. This stage covers:

- Screenplay development and scriptwriting
- Assembling the creative team
- Recruiting talent
- Meeting the production and contractual requirements needed to prepare the project for financing and production

Once the screenplay and complete project package are ready, Ron and Michelle plan to approach film companies and other financing partners to secure production financing.

Why this film matters

At its heart, *Zulu Dreams* is more than my personal story. It is a story about possibility: the possibility created by education, mentorship, perseverance, generosity, and opportunity. I believe this film will inspire people, particularly those from marginalized and low-income communities, to pursue education, set ambitious goals, and imagine a future beyond the circumstances of their birth.

My journey began in a South African township. It led me to the United States, to advanced education, to a career in education, and to the privilege of watching my children pursue their dreams at Harvard and Georgetown. I hope this story reminds audiences that where we begin need not determine where we end.

Next step

If this project resonates with you, I would welcome a conversation with you, Ron, and Michelle to share our vision, answer your questions, and discuss how you might be involved. To learn more about my story and the Zulu Dreams project, please visit zuludreams.com.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to speaking with you soon.

Sincerely,

Richman Bongani Mahlangu
Author, *Zulu Dreams: From Apartheid to the Ivy League*
Email: zuludreams60@gmail.com