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Letter of Recommendation for Stanford Gibson

Stanford Gibson was my student at the Big Fish School of Digital Filmmaking in Johannesburg, where he completed an accelerated documentary film course that ended in March 2013. The Big Fish teaching approach simulates the work environment by immersing students in the practice of filmmaking. Each student graduates with a basic practical knowledge of making a documentary film from beginning to end.

Stanford is an admirable example of courage and dogged perseverance when it comes to pursuing ones passions in life. He left behind a lengthy career in auditing and in just nine months, he has successfully fulfilled roles on various productions as director, producer, camera & soundperson and editor (Final Cut Pro).

Nothing Stanford does will be mediocre as his drive to chase down the truth, to reveal the new and to challenge ways of seeing, will serve to elevate his work to the exceptional. His humility and ability to interrogate his own perceptions means that Stanford is always open to learning. He approaches work with the same integrity that he applies to life and the subjects in his films have tended to open up to him as a result.

His final film project *Beauty Beyond Colour*, which he conceptualized, directed and co-produced, is a biographical portrait of an albino model who also works as a prosecutor for the NPA. He pitched the film in response to a very challenging “celebrity” brief from Mzansi Magic. Stanford’s interpretation of the brief is testimony to what this man has to offer the world with his stories: he might give you what you want, but it won’t be in the way you expect it.

Stanford possesses strong leadership ability. He inspires an unintentional but profound change in those around him, through his own actions. I have seen the ripple effect of this quality on his classmates and on productions - where his calm, rational and lucid thinking have helped restore balance to potentially volatile situations. In fact, his ability to work with a range of personality types, and inspire the best from each member of the crew is extraordinary.

On the course, Stanford has been present, punctual and reliable. Because his motivation comes from within, it has never been a struggle to convince him about the benefits of the course. I believe he has obtained optimum benefit from the course because of the sterling effort he has put into it.

I am thankful to have had Stanford in my class. I highly recommend him to be a part of any further studies, work opportunities or funding prospects that will acknowledge and develop his talents. I look forward to seeing more of Stanford’s creative manifestations in future and wish him only the best in these endeavors.

Best,

Karima Effendi