

Letter from Producer Karen Williams

The seeds for *BRING YOUR "A" GAME* were planted over five years ago during a walk from the train station to a destination in Brooklyn, NY during after-school hours. In just ten short minutes, I listened to loud litanies of profanity and vulgarity belt from the mouths of innocents; I witnessed an excessive number of young Black males hanging out at the corner bodegas; and I saw a young Black boy in handcuffs being escorted by policemen. At no point on this brief walk did I observe an adult male interact positively with a young Black male. I arrived at my destination resolved to rectify this negligence; and that commitment provided the fuel to manifest *BRING YOUR "A" GAME*.

This journey would not have been possible without my friend Mario Van Peebles responding to my call with a resounding 'yes' and lending his creative vision and support. Twenty-First Century Foundation (21CF) took a tremendous leap of faith by venturing into the unknown territory of film production. Thanks to 21CF's Board of Directors and staff for their tireless efforts and to the generous funders that facilitated *BRING YOUR "A" GAME*.

My deepest thanks to the countless crew and individuals who displayed degrees of grace and kindness often not associated with the jaded realm of filmmaking. Special thanks to Scott Billups, whose genius transformed *BRING YOUR "A" GAME* into a spectacular virtual world; to Lillian Benson, whose commitment to rescuing our brothers was always present as she deftly navigated mountains of hurdles to decipher the story; and to Aubree Curtis and Gabe Kleinman, whose sage guidance and unbridled support helped soldier our vision into reality.

Finally, it is with great pride and gratitude that I acknowledge the generosity and brilliance of all of the men featured in our show. May their words and actions inspire new generations of "A" Gamers to emerge into prominence, resurrect our communities and bring us into collective greatness.

Karen Williams, Producer