

USC Cinematic Arts

The Dimitri Tiomkin Endowed Fund for Student Assistantships 2019-2020

James Grisom
Graduate, Film and Television Production
Second Year

About This Student



James Grisom joined the production team for the documentary, *Still I Rise*, in 2013. As the composer, editor, artist, and creative partner, *Still I Rise* has been elevated by James' contributions on all fronts. James was previously a nominee at Cambridge University's 2017 Watersprite Film Festival for Filmmaker of the Future Award. In the same year, the African American Policy Forum selected James to take part in the Intergenerational Breaking the Silence Group at Vassar College. While attending UC Berkeley, James founded

Knowledge Seekers, a safe space for students of various cultural beliefs and ideologies to share their thoughts on life. He studied religion and philosophy while playing wide receiver for the Cal Bears Pac 12 football team. In 2014, James received the Jonathan and Judy Hoff Scholar-Athlete of the Year Award for his commitment to his intellectual pursuits on and off-campus. After graduating from UC Berkeley, James worked in San Francisco at the Hamilton Families Shelter. He also served as an afterschool activity leader for Rosa Parks Elementary in Berkeley. There, he co-facilitated a social, emotional group for third-grade boys aimed at empowering kids through knowledge, art, and history of Black culture. He is currently in his second year at USC.

On Gratitude

My first year at USC was a dream come true. I had the opportunity to screen my short film, *Bobby*, at Norris Theater. After the screening, my dad came to me with tears in his eyes. He did not say one word but instead held me in silence. This isn't just a dream for me, but my family as well. In the past, I've had to work multiple jobs to support myself and my family. They give me all the support and love I can ask for, but financially, it is tough for them. With financial support of the Tiomkin Endowment Fund, the stress of balancing finances will be less of a burden as it has been in the past. I have always dreamed of telling stories that combat the negative messages that have impacted my family, my community, and me. This past year, I challenged myself to create films to confront these narrow definitions. Along this journey, I've been honored to work alongside my talented cohort. It's been a pleasure pushing each other to translate our visions onto the screen. Through this, I grew with them not only as a filmmaker but also as a person. I am excited to continue to grow with my Trojan family! Thank you!



A handwritten signature of James Grisom in black ink.

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Anna Cassady (Jingwei Li)
Graduate, Film and Television Production
Third Year

About This Student

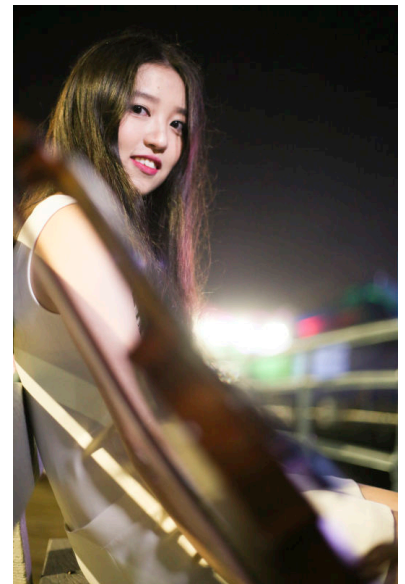


Anna Cassady grew up in the small, mountainous Chinese city of Guiyang. Pursuing her dream of filmmaking, she moved to New York and received her BA degree from SUNY - Binghamton in Cinema and Mathematical Science. The time spent in New York exposed her to the art of experimental filmmaking. However, with a heart to tell stories, she decided to take a more narrative path and moved to the center of the film industry, Los Angeles. With a mixed cultural background, she believes that personal experiences shape the uniqueness of an artist and spends a large part of her life collecting these experiences. Anna has bicycled and hitched-hiked to the basecamp of Mount Everest, and she has also picked up a hitchhiker in Death Valley. The encounters of her life have always appeared in her films in some form. Before filmmaking, Anna also showed an interest in music and has performed in many concerts as a violinist. Her previous short films have premiered in Toronto, New York, Long Island, Salt Lake City, and Oaxaca. She is

currently continuing her filmmaking adventure in the MFA production program at USC, concentrating on directing and sound design.

On Gratitude

I feel very grateful and honored to be selected as a Student Assistant. The generous scholarship from the Dimitri Tiomkin Endowed Fund will help me to get one step closer to my filmmaking dream. Ever since my first encounter with cinema, I dreamed of the magical world that shines on the screen. Even though at the time it felt like a mirage I could never reach, I was determined to head toward that direction. After high school, I decided to come to the U.S. to learn more about film. It wasn't an easy decision for my family, but they supported me nevertheless. Now, I'm standing in the heart of the film industry and learning at the best film school in the world. SCA has not only taught me the techniques and skills to be a filmmaker but also the mindset. I feel more confident in expressing my view and pursue my vision. I was encouraged to explore different aspects of filmmaking, and I discovered my passion for directing and sound design. The award has validated my effort and talent at USC, and I'm going to keep pursuing my dreams until they come true.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Jingwei Li".