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## **STORYCORPS ANNOUNCES THE ADDITION OF TWO NEW ANCHOR COMMUNITIES FOR ONE SMALL STEP, ITS NATIONAL INITIATIVE TO HELP MEND THE FRAYING FABRIC OF AMERICA**

### **One Small Step Expands to Oklahoma City & California's Fresno/Central Valley Region in an Effort to Spark Meaningful Connection and Combat America's Current Culture of Contempt**

**Brooklyn, NY—Monday, January 10, 2022—StoryCorps**, the national nonprofit dedicated to recording, preserving, and sharing the stories of Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs, announces two new regions of focus for **One Small Step**, its multi-year effort to help combat toxic polarization one conversation at a time. This year, **Oklahoma City, Oklahoma** and **California's Fresno/Central Valley** region join **Richmond, Virginia** and **Wichita, Kansas** as anchor communities for the initiative. StoryCorps hopes that these politically diverse regions can serve as models for other communities, demonstrating what's possible when people take time to listen to those with whom they disagree.

Piloted in 2018, One Small Step brings people with different political views together to record a 50-minute conversation—not about politics, but about who they are as people. In 2022, StoryCorps is leveraging its free recording tools so that during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, One Small Step participants have the option to record in person or remotely. With participant permission, interviews are archived at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress.

In each anchor community, StoryCorps collaborates with a broad spectrum of local leaders and community organizations to recruit participants, who are then paired with fellow residents of differing perspectives for meaningful, intimate, and courageous conversations. 2022 marks the third year that One Small Step has worked in Wichita and Richmond; former One Small Step anchor communities include Shreveport, Louisiana and Birmingham, Alabama.

The purpose of One Small Step is to decrease feelings of contempt across political divides and enable Americans to be part of the solution by seeing each other's humanity.

"One Small Step is a moonshot effort to counteract, one conversation at a time, the culture of contempt in this country," said **StoryCorps Founder and President Dave Isay**. "We believe that the communities of Richmond, Wichita, Oklahoma City, and California's Central Valley can show all Americans what's possible when we take time to listen to folks with whom we disagree and begin to see each other as human beings again."

Since its founding by Isay in 2003, StoryCorps has perfected a method for helping people feel more connected to each other, increasing hope, and reminding us of the inherent worth of every life and every story. Approximately 600,000 Americans have participated in StoryCorps to date, making its archive of recordings at the Library of Congress the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered.

### **More About One Small Step**

StoryCorps first piloted One Small Step as a response to the political divides that escalated during, and following, the 2016 presidential election. Since then, data has shown a widening chasm between Americans. A 2019 research paper entitled "Lethal Mass Partisanship" by political scientists Lilliana Mason and Nathan P. Kalmoe, show that approximately 40 percent of people in each party view the opposing party as "downright evil"; one in five Republicans and Democrats agree with the statement that their political adversaries "lack the traits to be considered fully human..."; and about 20 percent of Democrats and 16% of Republicans think the country would be better off if large numbers of the opposition were dead. To begin undoing the idea of "us" versus "them," One Small Step is designed to be replicated in communities across the country and to date, over 2,000 Americans in 40 cities and communities have participated.

One Small Step is made possible by the generous support of The Hearthland Foundation, the Fetzer Institute, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, and the Charles Koch Institute. StoryCorps thanks these donors for their commitment to this project and to bridging divides in America.

### **About StoryCorps**

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps has given nearly 600,000 people, in all 50 states, the chance to record interviews about their lives. The award-winning organization preserves the recordings in its archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered, and shares select stories with the public through StoryCorps' podcast, NPR broadcasts, animated shorts, digital platforms, and best-selling books. These powerful human stories reflect the vast range of American experiences, engender empathy and connection, and remind us how much more we have in common than what divides

us. StoryCorps is especially committed to capturing and amplifying voices least heard in the media. The StoryCorps MobileBooth, an Airstream trailer that has been transformed into a traveling recording booth, crisscrosses the country year-round gathering the stories of people nationwide. Learn more at [storycorps.org](http://storycorps.org).

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