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StoryCorps Announces *One Small Step*, a Major New Initiative to Reclaim America's Civil Discourse

The Largest Collection of Human Voices in History Now Applies Its Belief in the Power of Listening to Connect Americans of Opposing Viewpoints

StoryCorps, the groundbreaking personal history project, which has given 500,000 Americans across all 50 states the chance to record conversations about their lives and preserve them for posterity at the **Library of Congress**, announces an audacious new initiative: **One Small Step**.

With *One Small Step*, StoryCorps seeks to counteract intensifying political divides, deepened daily on social media and elsewhere, by facilitating and recording face-to-face conversations that enable Americans who disagree to listen to each other with respect. *One Small Step* aims to remind us that we have more in common than divides us and that treating those with whom we disagree with decency and respect is essential to a functioning democracy.

This fall, StoryCorps will issue a broad call for people to record *One Small Step* interviews via the organization's MobileBooths and free mobile app. *One Small Step* will launch with a special event at the Newseum in Washington, D.C. on September 27, 2018, at 6:30pm. Additional details will be announced soon.

StoryCorps is also working to build a network of local hubs to help connect people from different political backgrounds. With support from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, StoryCorps will provide training and production assistance to local public radio stations in six locations across the country. In 2019, StoryCorps and NPR will team up to organize a live nationwide event to amplify the work of public radio stations fostering civility and discourse in these communities.

"StoryCorps has proven again and again that bringing people together in conversation is a powerful force for deepening understanding and respect. *One Small Step* is a great example of public media's commitment to giving voice to the many perspectives in our country and strengthening our civil society," said Pat Harrison, President and CEO of the Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

This initiative also gives participants an opportunity to bridge geographical divides using technology. In partnership with local public radio stations, StoryCorps will offer the chance to record *One Small Step* conversations between

individuals in separate studios, in different cities, with remote facilitators, using video conferencing technology powered by [Cisco](#).

Since its founding in 2003, StoryCorps has brought people of all backgrounds and beliefs together to thank and honor one another through listening. Participants have asked their spouses, parents, mentors, colleagues, and others who they are, what they've learned in life, and how they want to be remembered, among other important questions. These conversations are recorded in booths and via the StoryCorps app and preserved in the organization's archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress. This format has evoked in more than 500,000 individuals an emotional authenticity that is increasingly rare in our cacophonous, technologized world. StoryCorps has gathered the largest single collection of human voices in history.

Within the media landscape, StoryCorps is uniquely equipped to challenge the barriers that imperil communication and empathy. In sharing its stories on in its flagship segment on NPR's *Morning Edition* and on other news platforms, listeners hear first-person accounts of life in America as told by people who are under-represented in mainstream media. In recent participant and listener surveys, 88 percent of participants said that StoryCorps made them feel "connected to people of different backgrounds," 81 percent said StoryCorps had "reminded listeners of their shared humanity," and 80 percent said StoryCorps "humanized social issues, events, and policies."

A hallmark of StoryCorps is that each interview is preserved in the Library of Congress, ensuring that the voices of our time will be available to future generations. Because StoryCorps participants recognize that their stories and interviews will be archived, they have historically approached their interviews with rare honesty, thoughtfulness and civility—and, importantly, a version of themselves closer to who they truly are at their best.

Rather than spark additional political debates, One Small Step encourages answers to questions like, "Was there a moment, event, or person in your life that shaped your political views?" "What is most hurtful to you about what people across the political divide say about people on your side and in your life?" "Do you believe that there are some threads that bind us all together, even when it seems there is so much more that divides us? What do you think they are?" and "Can you think of any traits you admire in people on the other side of the political divide?"

"Our nation is divided. Much of what is driving that division is fear, and a lack of understanding and empathy for those with whom we don't agree. Our democracy is vulnerable when it is driven by fear and hopelessness," says StoryCorps founder Dave Isay. "We believe that StoryCorps has the potential to help pump the brakes on the growing discord tearing at the fabric of our nation. StoryCorps stokes trust—it speaks across divides, stitches us together, and brings out our best and highest selves. We hope that One Small Step will provide a beacon of hope during these difficult and divided days."

One Small Step is supported by a broad coalition of government and philanthropic support. Major supporters include [The Rockefeller Foundation](#), [the Fetzer Institute](#), [the Corporation for Public Broadcasting](#), [the Einhorn Family Charitable Trust](#), [The Charles Koch Foundation](#), and [the Righteous Persons Foundation](#). Additional support provided by Present Progressive Fund at Schwab Charitable.

About StoryCorps

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps has given 500,000 people—people of all backgrounds and beliefs, in thousands of towns and cities in all 50 states—the chance to record interviews about their lives. The organization preserves the recordings in its special StoryCorps 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, wisdom and values; engender empathy and connection; and remind us how much more we have in common than divides us.

StoryCorps is especially committed to capturing and amplifying voices of everyday people least heard in the media. The StoryCorps MobileBooth, an Airstream trailer the organization has transformed into a traveling recording booth,

crisscrosses the country year-round in order to gather the stories of people nationwide. With the 2015 TED Prize awarded to Dave Isay, StoryCorps launched a free mobile app that puts the StoryCorps experience entirely in the hands of users and enables anyone, anywhere to record meaningful conversations with another person and upload the audio to the Library of Congress. StoryCorps also records interviews in its permanent StoryBooths, in New York, Chicago and Atlanta.

Recording an interview in a StoryCorps booth couldn't be easier: You invite a loved one, or anyone else you choose, to a StoryCorps recording site. There you're met by a trained facilitator who explains the interview process, brings you into a quiet recording room and seats you across from your interview partner, each of you in front of a microphone. The facilitator hits "record," and you share a 40-minute conversation. At the end of the session, you walk away with a copy of the interview, and a digital file goes to the Library of Congress, where it will be preserved for generations to come.

StoryCorps is working to grow into an enduring national institution that fosters a culture of listening in the United States; celebrates the dignity, power and grace that can be heard in the stories we find all around us; and helps us recognize that every life and every story matter equally. In the coming years StoryCorps hopes to touch the lives of every American family.

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