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In Wake of 2020 Election, StoryCorps Leads Multi-Year Initiative to Repair and Re-Humanize a Divided America through Conversation

The Renowned Public Service Organization Deploys to Four U.S. Cities to Record Voices for Inclusion in the Library of Congress

StoryCorps, the national nonprofit dedicated to recording, preserving, and sharing the stories of Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs, today announces the national scaling-up of **One Small Step**, a multi-year effort to begin to mend the fabric of a country at the breaking point.

One Small Step brings together strangers of differing perspectives for courageous and meaningful conversations about their lives. These small but effective interventions help decrease feelings of contempt across political divides, allowing Americans to see one another as human beings. Developed over the past three years by StoryCorps with the input of scientists, researchers, and psychologists, the initiative records 40-minute conversations among unlikely pairings of individuals in today's hyperpartisan and politically charged environment. Conversations recorded for One Small Step are not about politics, but rather about who we are as people: what we care about, and our dreams for the future. Every interview becomes part of American history at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress (with participant permission).

In 2020, One Small Step (OSS) will be anchored in four politically divided cities that StoryCorps research indicates have a good probability of adopting the ethos and techniques of OSS's listening across divides into their communities: **Wichita, KS; Birmingham, AL; Richmond, VA; and Shreveport LA.**

In each community, StoryCorps is collaborating with a broad spectrum of media, political, religious, and community organizations to recruit participants to pair with fellow residents for meaningful, intimate, and courageous conversations about their lives.

“Every day brings new evidence of the rage Americans feel towards each other,” said **StoryCorps Founder and President Dave Isay**. “We know that whatever happens on Election Day, a huge percentage of the country will still feel contempt towards those across the political divide. Our hope is that One Small Step, in these cities and across the country, will remind all Americans of the humanity in all of us, and that it’s hard to hate up close. In the months ahead, with this moonshot initiative, we hope to help Americans move beyond the labels of ‘Democrat’ or ‘Republican,’ ‘Liberal’ or ‘Conservative,’ and begin to see each other as human beings.”

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. More than 600,000 Americans have participated in StoryCorps to date, making its archive of recordings at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered.

StoryCorps first piloted One Small Step as a response to the divides evident from the 2016 election. In the time since, data have shown a widening chasm between Americans. A **2019 study** showed that about 40 percent of people view the other 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 Republicans think the country would be better off if large numbers of the opposition were dead.

StoryCorps designed One Small Step to leverage its interview model and begin undoing the idea of “us” versus “them” in the United States. During the pilot phase in 2018-19, the organization recorded 800 Americans in 40 cities. These conversations were successful in increasing hope and decreasing contempt in participants, and with its special interview methodology, StoryCorps is now expanding its effort to heal and humanize each other in the challenging months and years ahead.

One Small Step is made possible by the generous support of the 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 by Dave Isay, StoryCorps has given 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 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 what divides us.

StoryCorps is especially committed to capturing and amplifying voices 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 to gather the stories of people nationwide. There are also permanent StoryBooths located in Chicago and Atlanta.

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. The StoryCorps app serves as a facilitator, guiding users through the interview experience, from recording to archiving to sharing their stories with the world. It provides easy-to-use tools to help people prepare interview questions; record high-quality conversations on their mobile devices; and upload the audio to archive.storycorps.org, which serves as a home for these recordings and also provides interview and editing resources.

StoryCorps recently launched [StoryCorps Connect](#), a new video-based platform that makes it possible for two people in different locations to conduct a StoryCorps interview safely and remotely.

After recording a StoryCorps conversation via any of these methods, you're emailed a link to your interview, and a digital file goes to the Library of Congress, where it will be preserved for generations to come.

StoryCorps is a 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 matters equally. In the coming years StoryCorps hopes to touch the lives of every American family.

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