

# StoryCorps

## StoryCorps

Contact: StoryCorps Griot  
Jo Flattery / Debra Carey / Gillian Kocher  
Dan Klores Communications  
(212) 685-4300

Contact: Smithsonian  
National Museum of African American  
History and Culture  
Fleur Paysour  
(202) 633-4761 [paysourf@si.edu](mailto:paysourf@si.edu)

---

### **CORPORATION FOR PUBLIC BROADCASTING, STORYCORPS, AND THE SMITHSONIAN LAUNCH HISTORIC INITIATIVE TO PRESERVE THE STORIES OF AFRICAN AMERICANS**

*The “Griot Project” Will Document Stories of African American Families;  
Largest Project of its Kind Ever Undertaken Will Visit Nine Cities across the Country,  
Including Atlanta, Chicago, Detroit, Newark and Selma*

**Washington, DC** – (February 7, 2007) – StoryCorps, the acclaimed project to create an oral history of America, together with the Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB), today announced the launch of the **StoryCorps Griot Project**, a year-long initiative to gather and preserve the life stories of African American families. The Griot Project, the largest undertaking of its kind in American History, will be carried out in association with the National Museum of African American History and Culture (NMAAHC). It is the first major national collaboration for the museum, which is expected to open in under a decade as the 19<sup>th</sup> museum of the Smithsonian Institution.

The “griot” is part of a West African tradition of story telling, a highly respected member of the tribe who acted as a living repository of births, deaths, marriages and significant events in the community. Griots were responsible not only for transmitting oral history through the generations, but also for ensuring that people found meaning in their own lives.

StoryCorps was created in 2003 by award-winning radio documentary producer and MacArthur Fellow Dave Isay. For the **Griot Project**, a StoryCorps StoryBooth – a mobile recording studio – will make stops of up to six weeks in nine cities across the country: **Atlanta; Chicago; Clarksdale, MS; Detroit; Memphis; Montgomery; Newark, NJ; Oakland; and Selma.** Griot will partner with local radio stations, historically black colleges and universities and other cultural institutions and membership organizations to record and distribute the stories of African Americans.

At the Griot StoryBooth, participants will record in pairs – often times friends or loved ones – and one person interviews the other. A trained facilitator guides the participants through the interview process and handles the technical aspects of the recording. At the end of a forty-minute session, the participants walk away with a CD of their interview. The unprecedented effort to capture the recordings of African Americans will help ensure that their voices, experiences and life stories will be preserved and presented with dignity. The stories will be preserved for future generations in the StoryCorps archive at the American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress and in the archives of NMAAHC. Griot will also partner with NPR’s “News and Notes with Farai Chideya,” and select stories will air on *Morning Edition*, the most-listened-to morning radio program in the country, and other local and national programs.

Reservations for the Griot tour can be made by calling 800-580-4406 or visiting [www.storycorpsgriot.net](http://www.storycorpsgriot.net). All interviews must take place in the StoryBooth; therefore, those interested in participating can review the schedule online to see when the tour will visit a city close to them.

“No one can tell my story better than I can,” said Congressman Charles B. Rangel (D-NY). “The same goes for the stories of the lives of everyday African Americans. The Griot Project is important because it will give African Americans a chance to share their stories the best way, first hand.”

“The Griot Project will bring the gift of StoryCorps to 2,000 African American families across the country, giving them the opportunity to honor loved ones, preserve their stories for generations to come, and educate the nation about the contributions of African Americans to the history of the nation,” said Isay. “Further, it continues our mission to teach people to become better listeners, foster intergenerational communication among families and communities, and help us to appreciate the strength in the stories of everyday people they find all around them. It is a privilege to do this work.”

“The Corporation for Public Broadcasting is pleased to support the StoryCorps Griot Project on this historic tour that will honor the untold personal stories of African Americans in our country,” said Patricia de Stacy Harrison, CPB President and CEO. “We are proud to be a part of this important initiative as it seeks to not only find and record, but also celebrate the contributions of African Americans in our history. The Griot Project represents the essence of public broadcasting: high-quality, groundbreaking public service that informs, enlightens and inspires our populace.”

“Recording the rich and compelling stories of African Americans across this country is in perfect alignment with a key commitment of this museum which is to encourage all Americans to remember, to reflect and to celebrate our shared humanity,” said Lonnie G. Bunch, founding director of NMAAHC. “Through this unprecedented relationship we will ensure that the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century Black America will be preserved, understood and made accessible for years to come.”

To date, StoryCorps tour has visited 54 towns and cities in 38 states, ranging from small towns to major urban centers. Reservations reached capacity in each city StoryCorps visited. In addition to the cities on the Griot tour, StoryCorps will also visit the following cities: Houston, TX; Jackson, MS; Lafayette, LA; Columbia, SC; Fayetteville, AR; Richmond, VA; Kalamazoo, MI; Hartford, CT.

### **About CPB**

CPB, a private, nonprofit corporation created by Congress in 1967 develops educational public radio, television, and online services for the American people. The Corporation is the industry's largest single source of funds for national public television and radio program development and production. CPB, a grant making organization, funds more than 1,000 public radio and television stations. [www.cpb.org](http://www.cpb.org).

### **About NMAAHC**

NMAAHC was created in 2003 when President George W. Bush signed legislation establishing it as the only national museum devoted exclusively to exploring and documenting African American life, art, history and Culture. It will be built in Washington on the National Mall on a five-acre site adjacent to the Washington Monument. Through nationally touring exhibitions, collections and educational programs, the museum will explore several areas of history including slavery, reconstruction, the Harlem Renaissance and the Civil Rights era. For details on its legislative mandate, visit the Web at [www.nmaaahc.si.edu](http://www.nmaaahc.si.edu)

### **About StoryCorps**

StoryCorps is a project of Sound Portraits Productions, the nationally acclaimed New York City non-profit founded by Dave Isay. For more than a decade, Sound Portraits has celebrated the lives and struggles of unheralded Americans who have quietly and courageously overcome adversity in award-winning public radio documentaries, as well as in books, CDs, museum exhibitions, and Web sites. StoryCorps opened its first StoryBooth, a freestanding soundproof recording studio, in New York City's Grand Central Terminal in October 2003 and opened its second StoryBooth at the site of the World Trade Center in lower Manhattan in July 2005. Two mobile StoryBooths have been traveling the country since 2005. StoryCorps has recorded 10,000 interview sessions to day. Individuals can listen to excerpts from past StoryCorps interviews at [www.storycorps.net](http://www.storycorps.net).

## **StoryCorps Griot Tour Schedule - 2007**

<b>City</b>	<b>Opening</b>	<b>Close</b>
<b>Atlanta, GA</b>	Thurs 2/15	Sat 3/24
<b>Newark, NJ</b>	Thurs 3/29	Sat 5/5
<b>Detroit, MI</b>	Thurs 5/10	Sat 6/16
<b>Chicago, IL</b>	Thurs 6/21	Fri 7/27
<b>Oakland, CA</b>	Thurs 8/2	Fri 9/7
<b>Clarksdale, MS</b>	Thurs 9/13	Sat 10/20
<b>Memphis, TN</b>	Thurs 10/25	Sat 11/17
<b>Selma, Al</b>	Thurs 1/10	Sat 1/26
<b>Montgomery, Al</b>	Thurs 1/31	Sat 2/16

###