



Selections from the newspaper about  
public TV and radio in the United States

**Home**  
CURRENT.ORG

**Search**  
THIS SITE

**Jobs**  
IN PUBLIC TV & RADIO

**Calendar**  
EVENTS IN THE FIELD

**Opportunities**  
FUNDING, TRAINING,  
AWARDS

**Documents**  
PUBLIC BROADCASTING  
POLICYBASE

**History**  
OF PUBLIC  
BROADCASTING

**Why**  
PUBLIC BROADCASTING?

**People**  
IN PUBLIC  
BROADCASTING

**About Current**

**Contact us**

**Links**

*Current*: the newspaper  
about public TV and radio  
in the United States  
Current Publishing  
Committee, Takoma  
Park, Md.  
(301) 270-7240  
E-mail:  
[web@current.org](mailto:web@current.org)

# CPB aids StoryCorps outreach to black communities

Originally published in *Current*, Dec. 18, 2006

By **Jeremy Egner**

Adopting the West African term for an oral historian, StoryCorps will begin its Griot initiative in February, sending a new mobile studio to African-American communities in eight cities. Over the ensuing year, the goal is to record 1,750 Griot interviews. The project will be announced publicly next month around Martin Luther King Day.

Describing the project Dec. 5 at a CPB Board meeting, StoryCorps creator David Isay introduced project spokesman LeAlan Jones, who was one of his two teenaged collaborators in their acclaimed 1993 radio doc, *Ghetto Life 101*, and in 1995's *Remorse: The 14 Stories of Eric Morse*. Jones is now 27 and a banker with J.P. Morgan.

"These stories are going to build value and equity for this society," Jones, sounding very bankerlike, told the board. StoryCorps helps all Americans understand "where we have come from, where we're at and where we're going," he said.

*Ghetto Life 101*, specifically Jones' poignant interview with his grandmother, was a key inspiration for StoryCorps, Isay told the CPB Board. "I saw the power of family interviews," he said.

StoryCorps, with two recording booths in New York City and two on the road, expects to record its 10,000th interview next month. In most, friends and family members interview one another, guided by trained facilitators ([earlier article](#)).

Selected Griot initiative interviews will be excerpted in

## EARLIER ARTICLES

[StoryCorps project](#) puts flesh on the bones of history, May 2006.

[LeAlan Jones and Lloyd Newman were 13](#) when they worked with David Isay to produce "Ghetto Life 101," which aired on NPR. (Isay posted this [update on them](#) in 2001.)

## LINK

[StoryCorps website](#) discusses other initiatives to [document the lives of 9/11 victims](#) and reach out to [people with memory loss](#).

In many parts of West Africa, it's [the griot's job to keep the history](#), according to a Penn State University article.

*Morning Edition*'s Friday StoryCorps slot. Isay also anticipates a "very strong relationship" between Griot and NPR's News & Notes.

Isay dreamed up the Griot project in August with CPB President Pat Harrison, who was eager to extend CPB's public awareness efforts ([September 2006 article](#)) to new audiences, Isay tells *Current*. A targeted StoryCorps project seemed like "a great way to expose nontraditional audiences to the value and riches of public broadcasting," he says.

CPB is fully funding the new effort, which will cost a little over \$1 million to staff and outfit, Isay says. A new Airstream trailer decorated with an African-inspired kente cloth design will spend six weeks in each of eight cities: Atlanta; Newark, N.J.; Detroit; Chicago; Oakland, Calif.; Clarksdale, Miss.; and Selma and Montgomery, Ala.

To reach potential African-American participants, the StoryCorps team will partner with stations at historically black colleges at each stop. Audio teams will take equipment to churches and family reunions to record on-site interviews, Isay says.

"Nothing can stir your heart," he says, "like the stories of how African-Americans have made it in this country."

---

Web page posted Dec. 19, 2006  
Copyright 2006 by Current Publishing Committee