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## **American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to House the StoryCorps Archive**

### **Library of Congress to Partner with Sound Portraits Productions to Create StoryCorps, a National Movement to Help Americans Tell Their Stories**

WASHINGTON, D.C., Sep. 30, 2003—The American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress today announced that it will house the recorded archives of StoryCorps, a ground-breaking oral history project that kicks off October 23 in New York City.

StoryCorps is a national initiative to instruct and inspire Americans to record one another's stories in sound. The project is the brainchild of MacArthur Fellow Dave Isay and his award-winning documentary company, Sound Portraits Productions (SPP). It is one of the largest documentary oral history projects ever donated to the Library of Congress, and it will be one of the first "born-digital" collections to come to the American Folklife Center.

"This project will provide America with important social documentation on a grassroots, nationwide scale that mirrors the historic Works Progress Administration (WPA) Federal Writers project accomplished more than half a century ago," said Peggy Bulger, director of the Library's American Folklife Center. "We are delighted to be partners with StoryCorps and to house a new generation of America's stories."

The American Folklife Center was created by Congress in 1976 and placed at the Library of Congress to "preserve and present American folklife" through programs of research, documentation, archival preservation, reference service, live performance, exhibition, public programs, and training. The center incorporates the Archive of Folk Culture, which was established in the Library in 1928 and is now one of the largest collections of ethnographic material from the United States and around the world.

The Archive of Folk Culture will be the repository for the StoryCorps collection. The Library's folklife specialists will be responsible for ensuring that the collection is preserved in digital form, appropriately indexed and cataloged, and then made accessible to the public. In this way, the StoryCorps collection will be available to future generations of researchers and family descendants.

"StoryCorps is a manifestation of the decade-long mission of Sound Portraits Productions to tell the stories of ordinary Americans with dignity, celebrating the power and poetry in their words," Isay said.

"We're honored to be entering this historic partnership with the Library of Congress and thrilled that the StoryCorps collection will be housed alongside the WPA recordings—the inspiration for this project."

StoryCorps will create soundproof booths across the country where Americans can bring relatives or friends to conduct broadcast-quality oral history interviews with the guidance of a trained facilitator. The facilitator will help create a list of questions and handle all of the technical aspects of the recording. At the end of the 40-minute session, the participants will be able to keep a CD of their interview. With their permission, a second copy will become a permanent part of the American Folklife Center's archives at the Library of Congress.

The opening of the first StoryBooth on Oct. 23 in New York City's Grand Central Terminal will launch StoryCorps' multi-year program. While the primary purpose of StoryCorps is to create a meaningful personal experience for participants, the project will also have a public component. In New York City, StoryCorps has partnered with WNYC, New York public radio, which will broadcast the best material

recorded in the New York City StoryBooths. Selected segments may also air nationally on NPR's (NPR) "All Things Considered" and be compiled onto "Best of StoryCorps" CDs.

StoryCorps is made possible with the generous support of the Rockefeller Foundation, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and the Carnegie Corporation. WNYC Radio is the public radio sponsor of StoryCorps-Grand Central.

American Folklife Center collections include the earliest field recordings made anywhere in the world, ex-slave narratives, folk music collected by John and Alan Lomax in the 1930s and '40s, original recordings of musical legends such as Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly, the work of Zora Neale Hurston, and the documentary record of more than

1,000 community heritage events and festivals that were designated "Local Legacies" by members of Congress as part of the celebration of the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Library of Congress. For more information on the center and its activities, visit its Web site at [www.loc.gov/folklife](http://www.loc.gov/folklife).

Sound Portraits Productions, a non-profit company based in New York City, is one of the country's most acclaimed documentary production houses; its mission is to tell the stories of ordinary Americans with dignity. Sound Portraits has accomplished this goal primarily through the creation of dozens of award-winning radio programs broadcast on NPR's "All Things Considered." To hear Sound Portraits programs, visit [soundportraits.org](http://soundportraits.org).

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