

**FROM:** WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER/SOUND PORTRAITS PRODUCTIONS

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## **STORYCORPS VISITS WEEKSVILLE HERITAGE CENTER, NOVEMBER 27-DECEMBER 20**

### ***NATIONAL ORAL HISTORY PROJECT WRAPS UP 2006 MOBILE TOUR WITH FIRST EVER VISIT TO BROOKLYN***

(NEW YORK, NY) – November 27, 2006 – StoryCorps, a national initiative to document everyday history and the unique stories of America, announced today that its final 2006 tour stop will be at the Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn, New York. The mobile StoryBooth, having traveled throughout the United States, will end its 2006 tour with its first ever visit to New York City. The StoryCorps mobile StoryBooth will spend eight days collecting stories at Weeksville Heritage Center’s historic Hunterfly Road Houses (1698 Bergen Street) from November 27 to December 20.

StoryCorps expects to record approximately 40 interviews during its stay at the Weeksville Heritage Center’s Hunterfly Road Houses at 1698 Bergen Street (Between Buffalo & Rochester Avenues) in Brooklyn. The Center is reaching out to residents of the historic community and other Brooklynites interested in recording their special stories. To learn more about StoryCorps, its visit to Weeksville and how to make an appointment to record your story, call 718-756-5250.

Jennifer Scott, Weeksville Heritage Center’s director of research, explains “StoryCorps is coming to Brooklyn for the very first time to gather the memories and stories of people in other parts of the city. We are especially thrilled that they have chosen to be at Weeksville Heritage Center’s historic site, as the project wonderfully complements our own mission to document the rich history of the African American community of Weeksville. We are especially thrilled to be able to host a special Founders Day on December 11 to record the personal stories of the people who were originally involved in discovering and saving the Hunterfly Road Houses.”

StoryCorps was created by award-winning radio documentary producer and MacArthur “Genius” Grant recipient Dave Isay. The multi-year project arranges for mobile recording booths to travel to every corner of the United States and, in coordination with the stations, document the everyday history and unique stories of ordinary Americans. The tour is sponsored by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, NPR and The American Folklife Center (AFC) at the Library of Congress. WNYC is the New York City public radio partner for StoryCorps.

The Weeksville Heritage Center is one of the earliest self sufficient African American communities in the country. It was founded in the early 1800's, only years after slavery ended in New York state. A thriving community by the 1860's, Weeksville produced the first female African American doctor in New York State, the first African American police officer in Brooklyn and some of the young men who fought in the Civil War's celebrated 54<sup>th</sup> Massachusetts Regimen. By the early 1960s, however, the community was all but lost to urban renewal—until the last, surviving residential structures were discovered. Now open to the public after a \$3 million restoration, the historic Hunterfly Road Houses are New York City landmarks and listed as nationally significant on the National Register of Historic Places. They stand as a testament to vibrant history of African Americans in the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The rich history of these houses and the historic community Weeksville is shared today through tours and education programs. StoryCorps offers another exciting way for the vibrant history of this community to be shared.

At the StoryCorps MobileBooth, participants record in pairs – oftentimes 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. With their permission, a second copy will be sent to the AFC where it becomes part of a high quality digital archive.

The StoryCorps tour has already traveled to 51 towns and cities and collected nearly 5,000 stories. The two MobileBooths - special recording studios built inside modified Airstream trailers - launched from the Library of Congress in Washington, DC in May, 2005. The booths visited communities, ranging from small towns such as New Town, North Dakota and Whitesburg, Kentucky to major metropolises such as Chicago and Atlanta. The reservations have sold-out in each city the StoryCorps MobileBooth has made a stop.

“We are thrilled to have this opportunity to make this final stop in 2006 to visit Weeksville Heritage Center in Brooklyn,” said Isay. “We have seen the profound effect StoryCorps has had on the lives of those who have participated in the project and are excited to have this opportunity to bring the booth home to New York and engage this community. We know the stories of the historic community of Weeksville will greatly enrich the experience for our participants and our listeners.”

StoryCorps opened its first StoryBooth, a freestanding soundproof recording studio, in New York City's Grand Central Terminal in October 2003 and in July 2005 opened its second StoryBooth in lower Manhattan. Over the course of the multi-year project, StoryCorps plans to open StoryBooths – both mobile and stationary – across the country. StoryCorps has recorded 8,500 stories across the nation to date. Individuals can visit **StoryCorps.net** to make interview reservations and listen to excerpts of other stories told in the booth.

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