StoryCorps Launches One Small Step America, a National Effort to Bridge Divides During a Contentious Election Year

One Small Step Pairs Strangers With Opposing Political Beliefs for One-on-One Conversations, Not to Debate Politics, but to Rediscover Their Shared Humanity

Research Shows One Small Step Dramatically Increases Americans' Willingness to Engage with the “Other Side”

Brooklyn, NY, Monday, July 8, 2024—StoryCorps, the national nonprofit dedicated to helping us believe in each other by illuminating the humanity and possibility in us all, today launches One Small Step America. This effort is the national scaling of the organization’s One Small Step initiative, and includes a national PSA campaign with digital, print, broadcast, and out-of-home advertising in markets across the country. Having focused One Small Step in three local Model Communities since 2021, StoryCorps today makes it possible for anyone, anywhere in the country, to quickly and easily participate in a One Small Step conversation by visiting TakeOneSmallStep.org.

In development since 2017 and currently active in Richmond, Virginia, Wichita; Kansas; and Columbus, Georgia; One Small Step pairs strangers with opposing political beliefs for conversations, not to debate politics, but to get to know each other as fellow Americans. The initiative is based on social psychology’s contact theory, which holds that meaningful interaction between people with opposing
views can help turn “them” into “us.” More than 5,400 people in over 40 states have participated in One Small Step to date.

**Dave Isay, Founder and President of StoryCorps**, said, “We are not as divided or as different as we think. In fact, 9 out 10 Americans are tired of division, scared of where it’s leading the country, and looking for a way out. As we scale One Small Step nationally, we want people to know that they are part of the ‘exhausted majority.’ One Small Step offers hope, sanity, and a simple step for Americans to take to help close the divides tearing at the very fabric of our nation. This is not a problem StoryCorps can tackle alone, but we believe we are uniquely positioned to make an impact, and will fight with everything we’ve got—because if the culture of contempt wins, we all lose.”

Research by accomplished scientists and pollsters shows that One Small Step is singularly effective in helping people with opposing political views see the humanity in their fellow Americans, and in seeding hope for meaningful communication once again. A study by **Yale’s Social Perception and Communication Lab** found that One Small Step participants show not only “increased empathy” toward their conversation partners across the political divide, but over time start to have greater understanding and empathy for those on the “other side.” Research by **More in Common** found an almost 50% increase in Americans’ willingness to engage with those on the “other side” after exposure to One Small Step content, including conversation snippets. **Benenson Strategy Group** found that One Small Step messaging makes communities as a whole feel significantly “more hopeful” and more likely to respect and to feel respected by those on the other side.

The PSA campaign, designed by creative agency **I.D/W** and featuring the designs of famed illustrator **Noma Bar**, will lead with the message “Let’s Talk...for a Change.” It will direct people to TakeOneSmallStep.org, where they can see conversations across the political divide modeled by One Small Step participants, sign up to record their own One Small Step conversation, or simply find more information about the initiative.

**Tim Dixon, Co-Founder of More in Common**, said, "One Small Step is one of the most hopeful things in the particular moment we are in. There is an appetite for concrete connection across political differences and no one is giving people an opportunity to express this. One Small Step has unlocked a secret that is so powerful and so basic: exposure to healthy conversation challenges the
prevailing narrative that we hate each other. Ordinary Americans connecting across differences offers hope. One Small Step is profound in its potential.

**Funding Credits**

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**About StoryCorps**

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps is a national nonprofit dedicated to helping us believe in each other by illuminating the humanity and possibility in us all, one story at a time. Nearly 700,000 people, in all 50 states, have recorded interviews about their lives through StoryCorps. The award-winning 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, radio broadcasts, animated shorts, digital platforms, and best-selling books. These powerful human stories reflect the vast range of American experiences, 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 that has been transformed into a traveling recording booth, crosses the country year-round gathering the stories of people nationwide. 2023 marked the 20th anniversary of StoryCorps. Learn more at [storycorps.org](http://storycorps.org).

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