



StoryCorps Appoints Reginald Dwayne Betts and Alex Blumberg to Board of Directors

Brooklyn, NY—August 15, 2023—**StoryCorps**, the national nonprofit organization dedicated to helping us believe in each other by illuminating the humanity and possibility in us all, one story at a time, has elected poet, lawyer, and Freedom Reads Founder and Executive Director **Reginald Dwayne Betts** and Gimlet Media Co-founder and Editorial Director **Alex Blumberg** to its Board of Directors.

Dane E. Holmes, Chair of the StoryCorps Board of Directors, said, “For two decades, StoryCorps has recorded stories that show the grace and humanity of everyday people living all around us. In this milestone year, we are not only celebrating the vast diversity of voices we have gathered, but seeking out more opportunities to build new bridges for Americans to connect through their shared humanity. Dwayne and Alex both bring invaluable experience to this pursuit of greater impact for the organization. We’re honored to welcome them to the Board.”

Reginald Dwayne Betts, a MacArthur Fellow, leads Freedom Reads, a not-for-profit organization that is radically transforming access to literature in prisons across the country through the installation of Freedom Libraries. When he was 16, he was prosecuted as an adult for committing an armed carjacking. He started reading and writing poetry during a nine-year incarceration for the crime. For more than 20 years, Betts has used his poetry and essays to explore the world of prison and the effects of violence and incarceration on American society. The author of a memoir and three collections of poetry, Betts has transformed his latest collection of poetry, the American Book Award-winning *Felon*, into a solo theater show that explores the post-incarceration experience and lingering consequences of a criminal record through poetry, stories, and the timeless and transcendental art of papermaking. In 2019, Betts won the National Magazine Award in the Essays and Criticism category for his *New York Times Magazine* essay that chronicles his journey from prison to becoming a licensed attorney. He has served as a Radcliffe Fellow at Harvard’s Radcliffe Institute of Advanced Study, a Guggenheim Fellow, an Emerson Fellow at New America, and, most recently, a Civil Society Fellow at Aspen. Betts holds a J.D. from Yale Law School.

Alex Blumberg co-founded Gimlet Media, the company behind the hit podcasts “StartUp,” “Reply All,” “Homecoming,” and more, and served as its CEO until it was acquired by Spotify in 2019. After the sale, Blumberg relinquished his role as CEO and became Editorial Director. Prior to founding Gimlet, Blumberg worked for years in public radio, most notably for Planet Money, which he co-founded at NPR, and “This American Life.” He has created radio documentaries covering such diverse topics as life aboard a U.S. aircraft carrier, teenage Steve Forbes supporters, and prisoners staging a production of *Hamlet*. His award-winning documentary on the housing crisis, *The Giant Pool of Money*, was named one of the last decade’s top ten works of journalism by the Arthur L. Carter School of Journalism and New York University. His wife, Nazanin Rafsanjani, is a native of Tehran and is currently studying at the Brooklyn School of Law.

Betts and Blumberg join the Board as StoryCorps celebrates 20 years since its founding on October 23, 2003, when the organization opened a recording booth in New York’s Grand Central Terminal and invited the public to record a facilitated conversation with a loved one. In the coming months, the organization will revisit and update classic StoryCorps stories on NPR’s *Morning Edition*, in a new slate of animations, and in a new season of the StoryCorps podcast. **Jason Reynolds**, one of the country’s most beloved young adult fiction writers and a former StoryCorps facilitator, hosts the StoryCorps 20th Anniversary Gala on October 17 at the Brooklyn Museum. Over the course of the year, the organization is offering numerous opportunities for the public to record StoryCorps conversations, including the **2023 StoryCorps Mobile Tour**; the **2023 Military Voices Initiative Tour**; StoryCorps’ groundbreaking **One Small Step** initiative, which pairs strangers with opposing political views for a facilitated conversation—not about politics—but about who they are as people; and the 2023 edition of the **Great Thanksgiving Listen**.

About StoryCorps

Founded in 2003, StoryCorps has given over 640,000 people, in all 50 states, the chance to record interviews about their lives. 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, NPR 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 collecting and amplifying voices least heard in the media. The StoryCorps MobileBooth, an Airstream trailer that has been transformed into a traveling recording booth, crisscrosses the country year-round gathering the stories of people nationwide. Learn more at storycorps.org.