



StoryCorps Griot

Tell your story...pass it on

By Clifford L. Williams

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Do you want to tell your story...the story of your family, a special event in your life, or cherished memories you want to share with someone special?

Now is your chance to participate in StoryCorps Griot, an oral history project that is touring America compiling stories of ordinary people who eventually will have their stories archived at the Smithsonian and the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C.

The Griot is part of a West African tradition of storytelling, where a highly respected member of the tribe acted as a living repository of births, death, marriages and significant events in the community. Griots were responsible not only for transmitting oral history through the generations, but also for ensuring that people found meaning in their own lives.

StoryCorps Griot is a one-year initiative, funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, to collect interviews from at least 1,750 African Americans. The StoryCorps Griot will place a special emphasis on the stories of World War II veterans and men and women involved in the Civil Rights struggle.

From February 15, 2007, through February 28, 2008, the StoryCorps Griot Initiative will make stops of up to six weeks in nine locations across the nation, partnering with radio stations, historically

black colleges and universities, and other cultural institutions and membership organizations, to record and distribute the stories of African Americans.

In cooperation with 91.7 KALW-FM, the StoryCorps Griot will bring its mobile recording studio to Frank Ogawa Plaza in downtown Oakland from Aug. 9 through Sept. 19. At the Mobile Booth residents will be able to sit in pairs--oftentimes friends or loved ones--where one person interviews the other.

A trained facilitator will guide the participants through the interview process and handles the technical aspect of the recording. At the end of the forty-minute session, the participants are presented with a CD of their interview.

The StoryCorps Griot Initiative will help ensure that the voices, experiences, and life stories of African-Americans will be preserved and presented with dignity. It will also build bonds between citizens and broadcast media by celebrating our shared humanity and collective identity.

The Griot Initiative, the largest recorded undertaking of its kind in American history, will be carried out in association with the National Museum of African-American history and Culture (NMAAHC).

The unprecedented effort to capture the recordings of African-Americans will help

ensure that their voices, experiences and life stories will be preserved and presented with dignity. The stories will be archived for future generations at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress and at the NMAAHC.

"StoryCorps will give African-Americans the opportunity to honor loved ones, preserve their stories for generations to come and educate the nation about the contributions of African-Americans to the history of the nation," according to StoryCorps officials.

"It will continue our mission to teach people to become better listeners, foster intergenerational communication among

families and communities, and help to appreciate the strength in the stories of everyday people."

During its six-week stay in the Oakland, officials estimate that thousands of stories will be told, and approximately 200 of them will be edited for use as a representation of Oakland's voices of African-Americans.

Since April 2005, the StoryCorps tour has visited 54 towns and cities in 39 states, ranging from small towns to major urban centers. Reservations have sold out immediately everywhere StoryCorps has visited.

Below are links to the StoryCorps web-site, a series of commonly used discussion topics for potential participants, and a registration how-to page.

<http://www.storycorps.net/griot/>
<http://www.storycorps.net/griot/#reservations>
http://www.storycorps.net/griot/great_questions/

All interviews must take place in the Mobile Booth; therefore, those interested in participating can review the schedule online to make appointments. Reservations for the Griot tour can be made by calling (800)850-4406, or by visiting www.storycorps.net