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Listening Is an Act of Love

*A Celebration of American Life from the
StoryCorps Project*

Edited and with an Introduction by
Dave Isay

“Dave Isay’s vision of collecting the everyday stories of Americans is so simple and yet so powerful. *Listening Is an Act of Love* will make you laugh, cry and think. These stories come from the souls of individual Americans. Collectively, they are who we are as a people. You cannot read this book without feeling proud of your country.”

—Former U.S. Senator **Bill Bradley**

“This book is absolutely remarkable. *Listening Is an Act of Love* is history in the richest sense of the word, the kind that makes people feel like they count. It’s a celebration of the lives of the uncelebrated. In our world today people feel helpless, but once they speak of their lives they become alive! This is what our country is all about. Never has a book been more timely or necessary.” —**Studs Terkel**

“Dave Isay’s *Listening Is an Act of Love* is a gift. I loved this book. I savored these stories. So candid. So open-hearted. So full of life. The StoryCorps project may well be the most important cultural event in America today. It’s about us. About who we are. About where we’ve come from, and where we want to go. *Listening Is an Act of Love* is the equivalent of eavesdropping on America. Read it – and pass it on to family and friends. It’ll inspire.”

—**Alex Kotlowitz, author of *There Are No Children Here***

“Here are the observations and memories of a giant, diverse nation’s citizens. In its sum, StoryCorps asks Americans to reflect upon their experiences, their times of travail, their achievements. In so doing, these individuals create an encompassing national narration: a people’s hopes, fears and aspirations, all rendered poignantly to attentive listeners whose respect has enabled, finally, a presentation of a people’s mind, heart, soul.”

—**Dr. Robert Coles, James Agee Professor of Social Ethics, Harvard University**

“This book is a collection of the most compelling excerpts from more than 10,000 interviews recorded, compiled by StoryCorps founder Isay (*Flophouse*), a radio documentary producer and MacArthur fellow. And they are compelling.” —***Publishers Weekly***

“In this gathering from [StoryCorps’] massive undertaking, we read the tales of survivors, trailblazers, bounty hunters, teachers, doctors, and bus drivers, to name a few. Some of their stories are excruciatingly tragic, revolving around events burned into our collective memory.

Others are so sweetly personal that one might feel voyeuristic reading them. Highly recommended.” —***Library Journal***

How often does one get to ask a loved one, “What was the happiest moment of your life?”, “What are you most proud of?”, or “How do you want to be remembered?” Occasions rarely arise for shared reflection in everyday life, but StoryCorps—the most ambitious oral history project in American history—is recording these meaningful conversations and ensuring that personal stories live on for generations to come. With two permanent recording booths in New York City, one at Grand Central Station and one at Foley Square, and mobile booths touring the country, StoryCorps has collected the memories of people from all fifty states and every imaginable walk of life, background, identity group, age, and state of mind – more than ten thousand in all. These interviews with everyday people are archived with the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress for future generations and excerpts of selected interviews are broadcast on National Public Radio.

In **LISTENING IS AN ACT OF LOVE: A Celebration of American Life from the StoryCorps Project** (The Penguin Press; November 8, 2007; \$24.95), Dave Isay, founder of Story Corps and legendary radio producer, selects the most remarkable stories from an astonishing trove of memories and arranges them thematically into a beautiful mosaic of American life. The themes of the interviews in this book remind us of the shared humanity that binds us all: Home and Family, Work and Dedication, Journeys, History and Struggle, and Fire and Water (which shares stories from September 11th and Hurricane Katrina). The voices heard in these interviews connect readers to real people whose lives are filled with extraordinary and ordinary experiences and who remind us that no matter who we are or where we come from, we all share this journey of life.

StoryCorps is making history and **LISTENING IS AN ACT OF LOVE** honors the participants of this revolutionary project and reaches out to those who now have the opportunity to share their lives through storytelling. The incredibly moving personal stories in this book reveal the real individuals who make up the American storybook and the preciousness of each and every one of our lives.

About the Author

Dave Isay is the founder of StoryCorps and its parent company, Sound Portraits Productions. Over the past two decades his radio documentary work has won nearly every award in broadcasting, including five Peabody awards. Dave has also received a Guggenheim Fellowship, a MacArthur Fellowship, and a United States Artists Fellowship. He is the author (or coauthor) of four books based on Sound Portraits radio stories, including *Our America: Life and Death on the South Side of Chicago* and *Flophouse*. He and his wife, Jennifer Gonnerman, live in Brooklyn.

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