

# Story Corps<sup>®</sup>

Listen. Honor. Share.

ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2020





**Our mission is to  
preserve and share  
humanity's stories  
in order to build  
connections between  
people and create  
a more just and  
compassionate world.**

#### A NOTE ON EXPERIENCING THIS REPORT

At the heart of StoryCorps' mission is making our work as accessible as possible. Throughout this report, we invite you to further explore our content and programs by clicking on the links embedded within this document (**that look like this**), which will take you to our website and other online platforms.

## CONTENTS

---

### LETTERS FROM LEADERSHIP AND BOARD ..... 3

Dave Isay & Robin Sparkman

Marta Moret

### STORIES TO REMEMBER ..... 5

### MEASURING OUR IMPACT ..... 7

StoryCorps by the Numbers

Where We've Been

### OUR WORK ..... 10

Building New Ways to Connect

The Power of Conversation During the Pandemic

Elevating Meaningful Stories

Facilitating Conversations Across the Divide

Connecting with Diverse Populations

Virtual Events & Partnership

Expanding Access to the StoryCorps Method

### IN MEMORIAM ..... 26

### SUPPORTERS ..... 27

National & Local Partners

Public Funders, Institutions, and Businesses

The Honors Society

Corps Members

### FINANCIALS 2020 ..... 36



# LETTER FROM LEADERSHIP

Dear Friends,

The past 18 months have been a time of quick pivots, hard work, and renewed commitment to our public service mission at StoryCorps. During one of the most tumultuous years in our nation's history, StoryCorps didn't miss a beat, and, thanks in no small part to your support, we were able to rapidly innovate to meet the moment.

At a time of gaping distances and divides in this country, StoryCorps worked tirelessly to help bring us a little closer together. Each day, we employed all of the tools we've developed over the years to strengthen meaningful connections between people and help us feel less alone at a moment when we needed it most. We've never been prouder of our team, or more steadfast in our belief of the critical role StoryCorps can play in healing and strengthening our country in the years ahead.

Up until 2020, every single one of the 650,000 people who had recorded interviews through StoryCorps had done so face to face. When COVID-19 hit, we began developing a first-of-its-kind technology so these conversations could continue remotely. By the end of March 2020, we tested and launched StoryCorps Connect – a video platform that enables people to record StoryCorps interviews with a loved one remotely, and upload the session safely and securely to the StoryCorps Archive at the Library of Congress.

In 2020, StoryCorps Connect enabled people to document history as it unfolded, helped them to forge connections with elders and other loved ones at a distance, and afforded teachers a meaningful remote learning tool for their students. StoryCorps Connect has since collected a vast mosaic of American experiences and stories, offering both a vital service for the moment and a record of these extraordinary times.

StoryCorps Connect gives us the opportunity now and going forward to expand our service offerings, giving people the opportunity to record meaningful conversations with loved ones any time no matter where they are in the country.

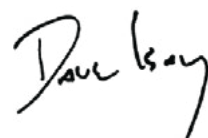
In 2020, we also deepened our commitment to honoring the diverse experiences of Americans from a range of backgrounds and beliefs. During a year of racial reckoning, we recorded stories of everyday Black and Brown families, and shared animations with tens of millions across America.

Other notable moments from 2020 include:

- We expanded **One Small Step**, StoryCorps' national effort to help mend our nation's fraying fabric by bringing strangers together for conversations across the political divide, to four anchor cities: Wichita, Kansas; Birmingham, Alabama; Richmond, Virginia; and Shreveport, Louisiana. Media coverage from a range of outlets, including AP and ABC News, helped to urge participation from a wider, national audience. The long-term goal of One Small Step is to convince the country that it's our patriotic duty to see the humanity in those with whom we may disagree politically.
- We launched **American Pathways**, a program to honor the experiences of refugees, asylees, and immigrants living in the United States. A special piece of this program is focused on Muslim voices and we dedicated this effort to the memory of StoryCorps Producer Liyna Anwar, who died in 2020 after a courageous battle with acute myeloid leukemia.
- In 2020, we continued to preserve the stories of service members and their loved ones through the **Military Voices Initiative** and created **stories like this**.
- Thanks to pro-bono work from Google Cloud, more than 65,000 signature StoryCorps interviews were transcribed using speech-to-text technology, and we made our collection of facilitated interviews accessible to all on the web as an extension of the public service we offer.

We look forward to building on these successes in the years to come. Thank you for your ongoing support and belief in our work.

Warmly,



Dave Isay, Founder & President



Robin Sparkman, CEO



Dave Isay



Robin Sparkman

Photos by Harvey Wang

# LETTER FROM THE BOARD CHAIR

## OFFICERS \*

Marta Elisa Moret, *Interim Chair*

Dane E. Holmes, *Vice Chair & Treasurer*

Michael Shuman, *Vice Chair*

Adelaide K. Jones, *Secretary*

Dave Isay, *Founder & President*

Robin Sparkman, *Chief Executive Officer*

## DIRECTORS

Aaron Bates

Audrey Choi

Sarah Elizabeth Feinberg

Miriam Hess

Gara LaMarche

Giovanna Gray Lockhart

Anne Herbert Mai

Jim Moore

Blythe Haaga Parker

Vic Parker

James Ransom

Jason Reynolds

Kim Rubey

Vanessa Toussaint

David Wadhwani

## EMERITUS MEMBERS

Former U.S. Senator Bill Bradley

Jane Phillips Donaldson

Kevin Klose

Deborah Leff

Thomas A. Moore

Murray Sinclair, Jr.

*\*Board as of June 2021*

Dear Friends,

There is no question that it has been a tough year for many of us. We've practiced social distancing, worn masks, and stayed home. We've been isolated from more than just one another's company. Opportunities to create and nurture through connections with friends and colleagues that help us make sense of the world have been diminished. Many of us talk about "skin hunger," missing the shaking of hands, hugging, congratulating each other for jobs well done.

In 2020 StoryCorps bridged that gap by recording and sharing stories that brought us all closer together. Millions of people heard those stories on the radio and online. They heard about hope, family, joy, love, forgiveness—panaceas to the horrors of COVID. The voices of first responders, families, teachers, deeply affected by COVID-19, are an indelible record for future generations trying to understand one of the most traumatic times in our world.

As I assume the role of Interim Board Chair for this amazing institution, I listened again to some of the stories featured on our podcast and NPR's *Morning Edition* broadcast that memorialized leaders whose presence we lost in 2020:

- **How Dr. King Inspired a Young John Lewis**, a conversation recorded with the late congressman not long before his passing.
- **Remembering Justice Ginsburg's Words**, a remembrance of Ruth Bader Ginsburg by the plaintiff of the landmark sex discrimination case *Frontiero v. Richardson*.

Through these stories, and others—many of which you'll explore on these pages—we find inspiration to forge new pathways for our mission. Sadly, Elizabeth McCormack will not be with us as we move forward. Elizabeth was a true leader and luminary who served on the StoryCorps Board for seven years. She and other dear friends of StoryCorps who passed in 2020 are honored in this report on page 26.

Your unfailing support for StoryCorps ensures that our platform remains exceptional. The people who come to StoryCorps come from all parts of our country and represent the diversity of backgrounds and beliefs that is the United States. Their courage to share their stories makes us all better. Thank you for supporting our work. We could not do it without you.

Sincerely,



Marta Moret, Interim Board Chair



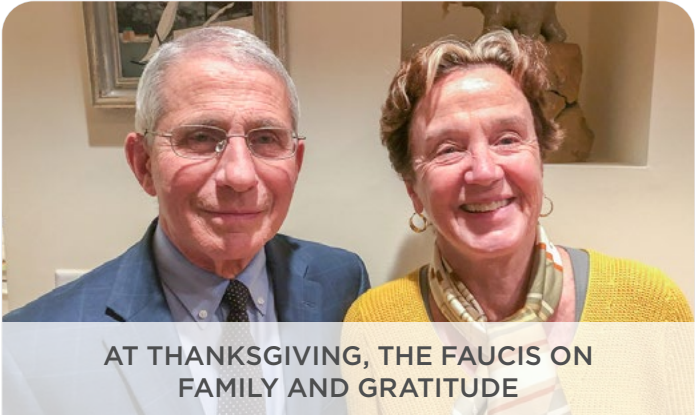
Marta Moret



# STORIES TO REMEMBER

## VOICES OF THE PANDEMIC

After launching virtual tools for recording and preserving conversations remotely in March 2020, we shared stories throughout the year elevating the voices and stories of people on the front lines.



### AT THANKSGIVING, THE FAUCIS ON FAMILY AND GRATITUDE

“They’re not going to be here... but we’ve got an enormous amount to be thankful for.”

Dr. Anthony Fauci and his wife, Dr. Christine Grady, who spent Thanksgiving without their three daughters for the first time, reflect on family life and the sacrifices they are choosing to make.

[Listen to the story](#)



### ALONE TOGETHER

“We had to stay far away, but I just felt better that you could be, like, a part of us.”

Dr. Roberto Vargas, who works as director of microbiology at a hospital, talks with his wife, Susan, and son, Xavier, about what his regular exposure to the virus has meant for their family.

[Watch the story](#)

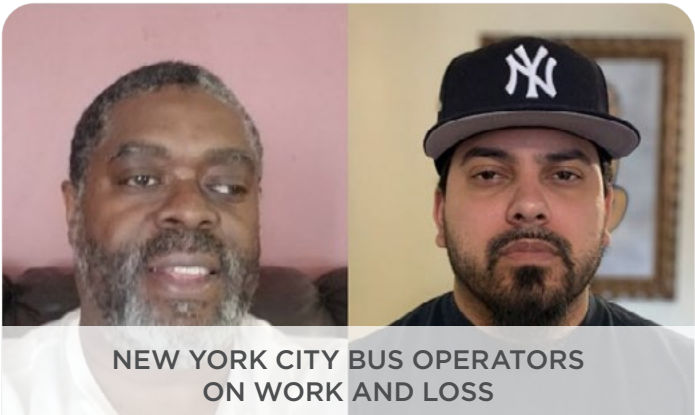


### FOR OLD FRIENDS, HOSPITAL WORK BRINGS NEW CHALLENGES

“The bravest of us right now is absolutely terrified.”

Longtime friends Josh Belser and Sam Dow, who are healthcare workers in different states, have a conversation to check in with each other.

[Listen to the story](#)



### NEW YORK CITY BUS OPERATORS ON WORK AND LOSS

“Every day that we step foot on that bus, we come home with the possibility of not infecting ourselves only, but our loved ones.”

New York City bus operators Tyrone Hampton and Frank de Jesus talk about how the pandemic has impacted their jobs and lives.

[Listen to the story](#)

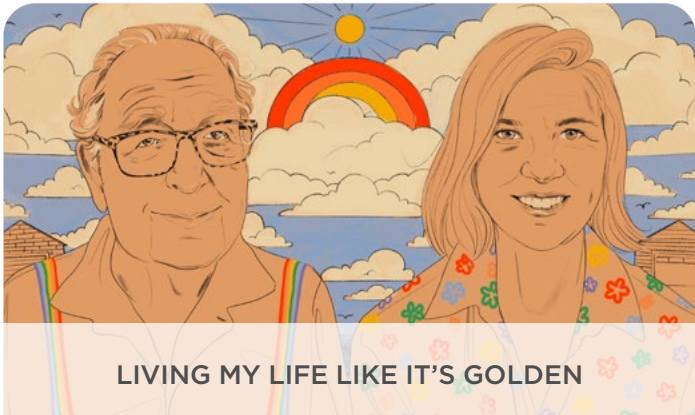


### ADVICE FROM A FUNERAL DIRECTOR, FIRST RESPONDER, AND FATHER

“When everybody is running away from the danger, we run towards it.”

Funeral director Dan Flynn talks with his daughter, Shannon Doty, about serving as a member of the national mortuary response team during the early days of the pandemic.

[Listen to the story](#)



### LIVING MY LIFE LIKE IT'S GOLDEN

“Being alone dug up all these memories from the past.”

How stepping into quarantine during the pandemic helped Kenneth Felts, 90, step out of the closet.

[Listen to the podcast](#)



# STORIES TO REMEMBER

## TOPICS OF OUR TIME

A selection of additional stories from Americans of all backgrounds and beliefs that we released in 2020, exploring themes that include family, identity, resilience, forgiveness, growing up, and remembrance.



### REMEMBERING JUSTICE GINSBURG'S WORDS

"When she spoke, everybody just sort of came to a hush."

In 1973, a young Ruth Bader Ginsburg made her first appearance before the Supreme Court to argue one of the first successful sex discrimination cases in U.S. history. Nearly a half century later, the plaintiff, Sharron Frontiero (now Sharron Cohen), looks back.

**Listen to the story**



### LEARNING TO FLY

"I saw my father in large part through the land, and I saw the land as my father's heart."

Growing up on his family farm in South Carolina, Drew Lanham was fascinated by birds, but life took him in a different direction. He tells his friend, John Lane, how he found his way back.

**Watch the animation**



### CARRYING THE WEIGHT

"I always felt forgiveness is something you give to yourself."

After the murder of Tariq Khamisa, how one man's decision to forgive the man who murdered his son brought two families together.

**Listen to the podcast**



### LEADING THE WAY

"You'd take me by the hand and lead me where you wanted to go."

John Washington Toomer, who is blind and deaf, sits down at 95 with his daughter, Melva Washington Toomer, to reminisce about some of his favorite memories as a dad.

**Watch the animation**



### MY AUNTIES

"It was a really wonderful, amazing world that came crashing down."

Stefan Lynch remembers the community of gay men—lovingly nicknamed his "aunties"—who helped raise him, the dark days of the beginning of the AIDS epidemic, and the lessons that he learned from this powerful family.

**Watch the animation**

EXPLORE MORE STORIES,  
PODCASTS, AND ANIMATIONS  
AT **STORYCORPS.ORG**,  
**FACEBOOK**, **INSTAGRAM**,  
**TWITTER**, **YOUTUBE**, AND  
**APPLE NEWS**.



## PARTICIPANT SURVEY \*

During a year when the StoryCorps participant experience underwent a radical change, the results of our survey showed that whether virtual or physical, a StoryCorps interview is a space in which people feel comfortable opening up to have meaningful conversations.

*Taken by 650 participants throughout 2020.*

**95%**

of participant survey respondents told us that they were able to listen to each other without distractions during their interviews.

**94%**

felt comfortable sharing personal things about themselves, and more than half thought they would be more comfortable sharing with others in the future.

**92%**

connected emotionally with their interview partners, and 79% continued feeling closer afterwards.

## ONLINE LISTENER SURVEY

Listeners report that StoryCorps content is changing how they feel about other people and society.

*Taken by 251 listeners on [storycorps.org](https://storycorps.org) throughout 2020.*

**90%**

said that they felt positively about society as a result of listening to StoryCorps.

**91%**

of online survey respondents reported that listening to StoryCorps helped them better understand the experiences of people who are different from them.

**90%**

said that listening to StoryCorps made them feel connected to others.

# STORYCORPS BY THE NUMBERS

The StoryCorps Archive at the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress, where StoryCorps conversations are preserved, is the largest single collection of human voices ever gathered, collected from thousands of towns and cities across all 50 states. Our timeless and stirring stories of hope, friendship, resilience, and generosity reach millions on-air, online, and on-demand.

## PRESERVING MEANINGFUL CONVERSATIONS

3,250

signature (facilitated) interview participants in 2020

145,935

All time

24,258

self-guided interviews using StoryCorps Connect & the StoryCorps App uploaded in 2020

227,360

All time

## PRODUCING POWERFUL STORIES

52

produced stories in 2020

9

animated shorts in 2020

23

podcast episodes in 2020

168

community and nonprofit partnerships in 2020

## SHARING WITH A NATIONWIDE AUDIENCE

14 million

listeners reached every Friday morning on NPR's *Morning Edition*, the most listened-to news program in the country

160 thousand

downloads of the StoryCorps Podcast each week in season

30 million

views of animated shorts in 2020

1 million

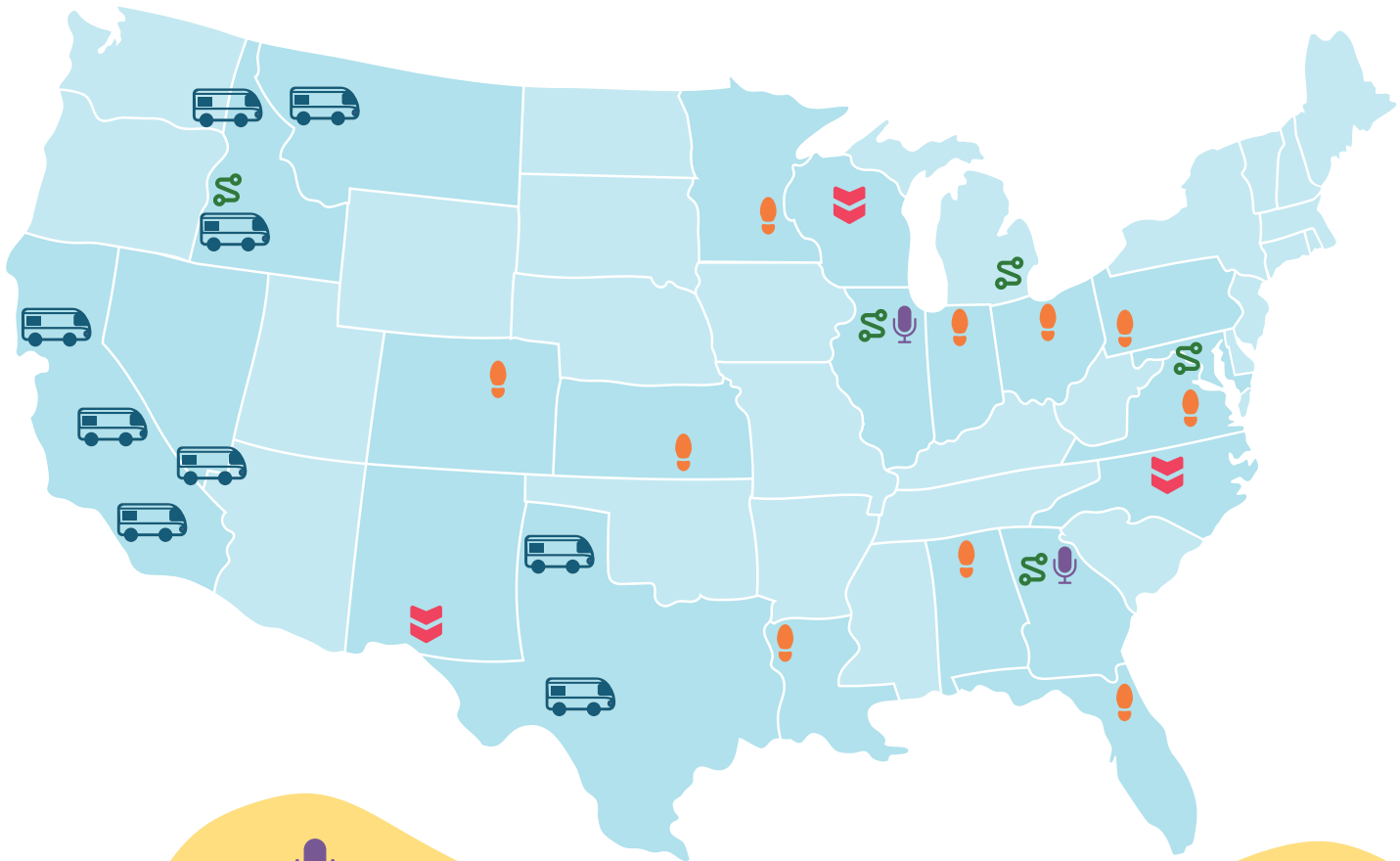
followers across social media platforms




# WHERE WE'VE BEEN

## STORYCORPS ACROSS THE COUNTRY


Despite the COVID 19 pandemic, we conducted virtual recording stops in communities across the country in partnership with local partners. Remote recording allowed our facilitators to travel the U.S. from the safety of their homes.



  
**MOBILE TOUR**  
**730**  
TOTAL RECORDINGS  
**75**  
COMMUNITY & NONPROFIT RECORDING PARTNERSHIPS

Clarkston, WA  
Bay Area, CA  
Las Vegas, NV  
Amarillo, TX & High Plains  
Marfa, TX & West Texas

Santa Monica, CA  
San Joaquin Valley, CA  
Boise, ID  
Missoula, MT &  
Montana statewide  
Lewiston, ID

  
**AMERICAN PATHWAYS**  
**54**  
TOTAL RECORDINGS  
**5**  
COMMUNITY & NONPROFIT RECORDING PARTNERSHIPS

Washington, DC  
Atlanta, GA  
Chicago, IL  
Boise, ID  
Dearborn, MI

  
**CHICAGO STORYBOOTH**  
**220**  
TOTAL RECORDINGS  
**28**  
COMMUNITY & NONPROFIT RECORDING PARTNERSHIPS

  
**MILITARY VOICES INITIATIVE**  
**127**  
TOTAL RECORDINGS  
**3**  
COMMUNITY & NONPROFIT RECORDING PARTNERSHIPS

Las Cruces, NM  
Raleigh, Durham,  
Chapel Hill, NC  
Wisconsin

  
**ATLANTA STORYBOOTH**  
**85**  
TOTAL RECORDINGS  
**10**  
COMMUNITY & NONPROFIT RECORDING PARTNERSHIPS

  
**ONE SMALL STEP**  
**231**  
TOTAL RECORDINGS  
**5**  
COMMUNITY & NONPROFIT RECORDING PARTNERSHIPS

Wichita, KS  
Birmingham, AL  
Richmond, VA  
Shreveport, LA  
Cleveland, OH  
Cuyahoga County, OH

Pittsburgh, PA  
Jacksonville, FL  
Denver, CO  
South Bend, IN  
Minneapolis, MN

# Building New Ways to Connect



Credit: Megan Jett

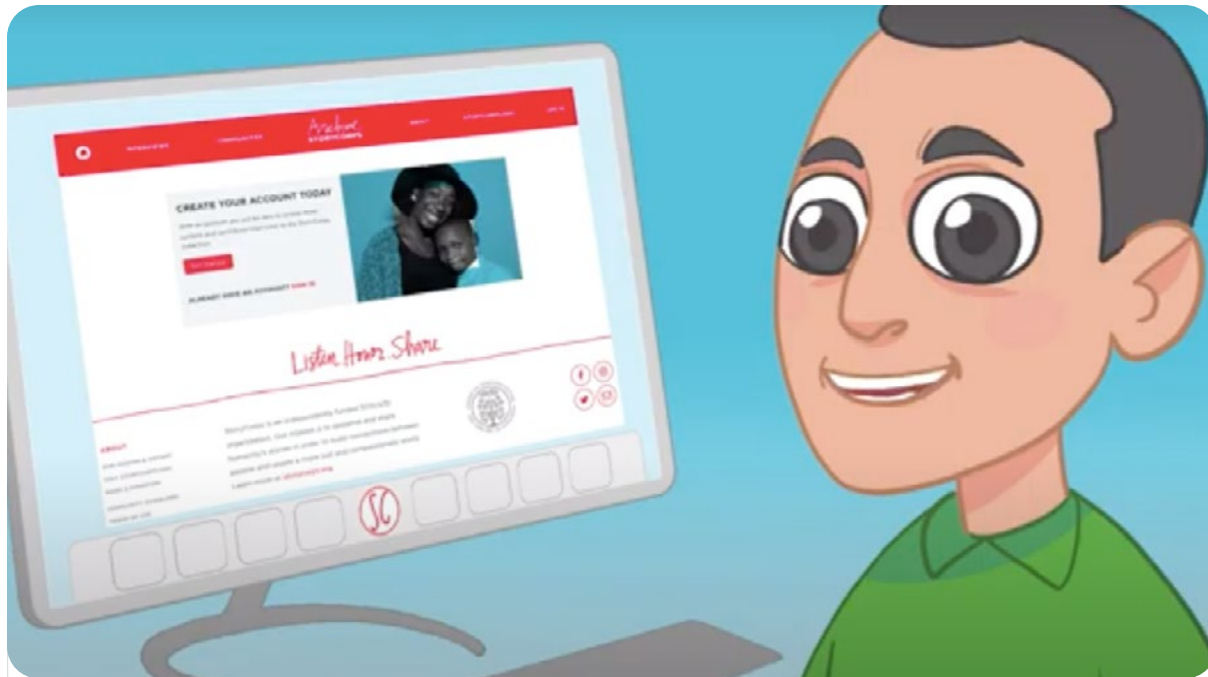


Animation: Alone Together

At StoryCorps, we provide spaces for people to sit face-to-face, and have the conversations that matter. When in-person exchanges became life-threatening in early 2020, we rapidly developed a new virtual platform to adapt the StoryCorps experience to the necessities of social distancing. Thanks to these efforts, despite the initial disruption to our activities, StoryCorps collected and preserved over 26,000 interviews in 2020.



# BUILDING NEW WAYS TO CONNECT



## STORYCORPS CONNECT: AN INTRODUCTION

[Watch the animation](#)

## STORYCORPS CONNECT

Mere weeks after nationwide lockdowns began in March of 2020, we launched **StoryCorps Connect**, an online platform that enables anyone to record an interview with a loved one remotely and preserve it in the Library of Congress. For the first time, this self-facilitated interview platform, available for broad public use, made StoryCorps conversations possible and accessible to people everywhere despite the pandemic, allowing them to celebrate milestones like marriage, birth, and graduation; to document experiences of everyday life during the pandemic; and to reflect on larger socio-political issues, like race relations in America. During 2020, people recorded StoryCorps Connect interviews nationwide in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 15 other countries globally.

The platform has been used organization-wide, enabling StoryCorps to quickly transition our vital national and regional programs to the virtual space. These include our StoryBooths in Chicago and Atlanta; our traveling Mobile Tour; American Pathways, a new initiative launched in summer 2020 to preserve the stories of refugees, asylees, immigrants, and Muslims living in the United States; and One Small Step, which brings together people who hold differing viewpoints to talk and listen.

“ I wish I had words to express how much this technology has meant to all of us. Thank you for making us all feel a little more connected and a little less distant in a time when that felt like an impossibility. ”

— KATY, STORYCORPS CONNECT USER




### JINNY SAVOLAINEN AND PORTIA WEISKEL

*“I just think that we need to remind ourselves of how amazing it is to be alive at all. I feel that so deeply.”*

When the pandemic hit the small, rural town of Leverett, Massachusetts, Jinny Savolainen decided to interview other residents remotely using StoryCorps Connect. In this conversation, she speaks with neighbor Portia Weiskel about the myriad ways their community has come together

[Listen to the story](#)

# THE POWER OF CONVERSATION DURING THE PANDEMIC



I feel like if my mother died tomorrow I would be at peace knowing I asked her all the questions I've always wanted to ask.


My wife thought when I invited her to church, she believed I was singing to the Lord. I was singing to impress her!

My [daughter] has paid much more attention to what I'd said in the past than I ever imagined.

In 2020, people across the United States used **StoryCorps Connect** to remotely record and preserve conversations that brought them closer together, despite the physical distance between them. Here's what some of them thought about the experience:

[It] is not as scary as I thought it was to let yourself be vulnerable. We often communicate with loved ones via text or quickly. This reminded us to take the time to have real conversations and check-ins.

It was just so invaluable to be able to sit down with my grandmother, who's hundreds of miles away from me, and feel like I was sitting right there with her. I felt I was able to listen in a whole new way. In a way that I normally am not able to have the time to do. As my grandmother is now 91, every moment like this I am able to take advantage of means the world.



I feel it gave me and my teenager a chance to have a heart-to-heart for 40 minutes uninterrupted about things that mattered to us both. A whole 40 minutes? Uninterrupted? This was a first.



# Elevating Meaningful Stories



Animation: Double Major

With so many people in America only able to experience much of the world through digital channels and media in 2020, StoryCorps created audio stories, animated shorts, and podcasts that aimed to create a robust mosaic of our nation's collective experience, elevate the voices and perspectives of those on the front lines, and foster connection, hope, and compassion for those feeling isolated.



Animation: Alone Together



# ELEVATING MEANINGFUL STORIES



Credit: Lindsay Mound

## BROADCAST STORIES

In 2020, StoryCorps continued to produce **award-winning audio stories** that aired nationally on NPR's *Morning Edition* and *Weekend Edition* and were shared widely through StoryCorps' digital channels and Apple News. Through stories of perseverance, love, loss, and fearlessness, even in the face of terror and renewal, we continued to support universal themes and champion voices from all backgrounds, beliefs, and geographic locations.

## ANIMATED SHORTS

**Animated shorts** released in 2020 brought award-winning audio stories from our collection to life on screens big and small. We proudly presented two new animation seasons: "Father Figures," in which father figures and their children share the strength and wisdom that they draw from each other, and "This Land," which features people reflecting on their connection to places in America and what those places mean to them.

## THE STORYCORPS PODCAST

The award-winning StoryCorps Podcast showcased two new collections in 2020. The first, "So Close (And Yet, at Least Six Feet Apart)," features stories of comfort, hope, and wisdom to remind us of our connectedness. The second season, "Looking Back, Moving Forward," shared stories from people who have lived through historical and personal moments of great change and found some perspective along the way—along with the voice of a new host, producer Kamilah Kashanie.

“ I wake up at 5:15 am on Fridays to start my day with StoryCorps. Thank you for providing stories that make us think, feel, and hopefully do better. ”

— LIZA, LISTENER



### JOHN LEWIS AND VALERIE JACKSON

*"I said, 'Dr. King, I am John Robert Lewis.'"*

The late congressman John Lewis tells his friend Valerie Jackson how he first met Dr. Martin Luther King, and went from "the boy from Troy" to a civil rights leader in his own right.

**Listen to the story**



# ELEVATING MEANINGFUL STORIES



Credit: Kirill Yeretsky

## REACHING NEW AUDIENCES

Throughout 2020, StoryCorps expanded our owned distribution channels and leveraged and developed new media partnerships to reach larger and more diverse audiences than ever before. In addition to continuing to make produced stories available via [storycorps.org](https://storycorps.org), and our social media platforms and email newsletters, StoryCorps distributed stories and animations to new audience segments through new and continued special partnerships, including with Google, POV, *PBS NewsHour*, National Geographic, the Audubon Society, the Museum of the City of New York, Apple News, Penguin Random House, AARP, and the Ad Council of America. Thanks to our success in expanding distribution, we estimate that in 2021 we will reach 50 million people with our empathy-driving content.

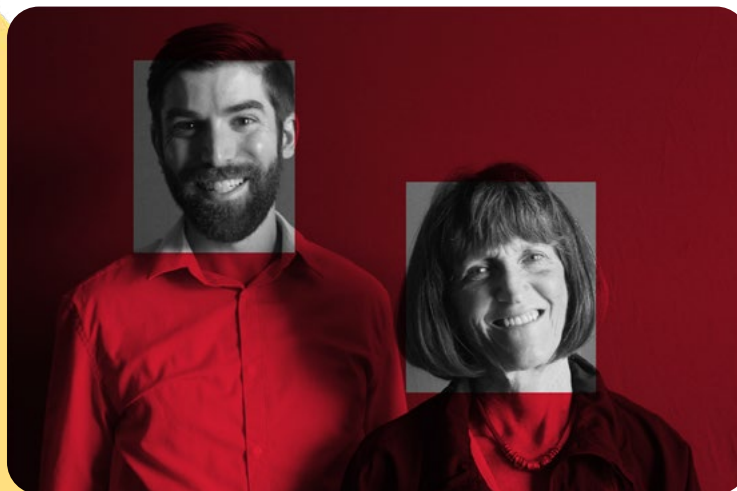
## THE STORYCORPS ARCHIVE

The StoryCorps Archive is the largest born-digital single collection of human voices, containing an ever-growing collection of more than 300,000 first-person interviews. To make our Archive more easily accessible for browsing, listening, and sharing, in recent years StoryCorps rolled out an expanded and updated **online portal to access these recordings**.

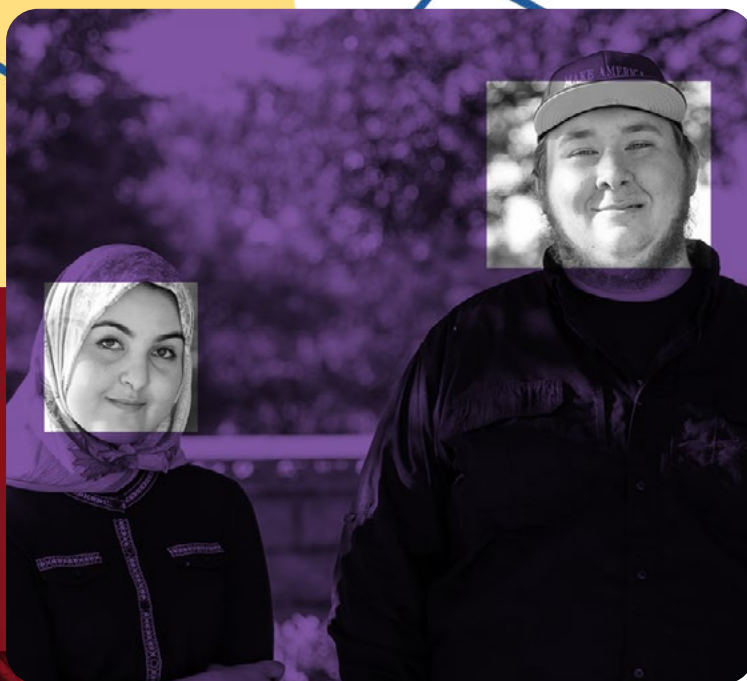
While interviews recorded on the StoryCorps App, our mobile app for self-guided recorded conversations, were already accessible on the platform, in 2020 we began a phased release of our collection of facilitated interviews, making them accessible outside of the Library of Congress for the very first time. We notified participants of the availability of their interviews online, inviting them to access and share them, set privacy controls, and explore our full collection. We also embarked on a new partnership with Google Cloud to transcribe all interviews through machine-based learning, revealing the content of individual interviews, enabling connections and patterns to be drawn across collections, and unlocking new possibilities for the use of the platform.

**“ In response to the pandemic shutdown, StoryCorps, the story-sharing nonprofit, moved its platform online for the first time. Interviews that used to be recorded in a physical studio can now be done using video conference technology. The audio and a photo from each interview will be preserved in the StoryCorps Archive and with the Library of Congress. ”**

**— THE NEW YORK TIMES  
APRIL 15, 2020**



# Facilitating & Conversations Across the Divide



In 2020, StoryCorps continued to expand One Small Step, our multi-year, national effort to counter the intensifying political divides and to help mend our nation's fraying fabric by rediscovering our common humanity.



# FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE DIVIDE



## ONE SMALL STEP: ABOUT THE PROJECT

**Watch the animation**

**One Small Step** invites strangers across political divides to have a 40-minute StoryCorps conversation to really get to know each other as human beings. Since One Small Step's 2017 pilot launch, we have recorded hundreds of conversations in over 40 U.S. cities, affirming that our method—two people in a safe and respectful conversation facilitated by StoryCorps—can increase our hope and decrease feelings of contempt for people who are different from us.

After three years of testing the methodology we launched nationally in October 2020.

While we are working in cities across the country, One Small Step is a nationwide project created by StoryCorps to help people get past the labels of “Republican” and “Democrat,” “liberal” and “conservative” to find our common humanity and remind Americans of the shared values that unite us.

“ [I]n its latest effort, the Ad Council aims to bring people in an increasingly polarized America together across the ideological spectrum. The Ad Council has partnered with StoryCorps... and agency Wordsworth + Booth to create a series of radio PSAs, plus digital out of home ads and online banners that feature meaningful conversations between individuals with very different beliefs, political views and life experiences. ”

— AD AGE,  
MARCH 3, 2021



# FACILITATING CONVERSATIONS ACROSS THE DIVIDE



## ONE SMALL STEP: COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS ACROSS A GROWING DIVIDE

Produced in partnership with NPR and released weeks before the presidential election, this special incorporates audio recorded at a live event in Birmingham, Alabama, in February 2020 with several interviews from people of opposite political views who came together with the purpose of really listening to one another.

[Listen to the audio special](#)

## ONE SMALL STEP PARTICIPANTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY:

“It reminded me that lots of people are struggling with the way they were raised and the reality in front of them. Lots of people are willing to ask questions and listen.

— SHREVEPORT, LA

Although there were several things that were different in our background, experience, race and religion, I was honestly surprised as to how much we agreed. This made me realize that although there are differences, that people can be united if we look for the similarities and not the differences.

— CLEVELAND, OH

It was truly meaningful work. At a time in our country when we all might feel powerless, conducting conversations that build bridges is critical and powerful. Facilitators are “urgent care nurses” for participants’ spirits. I am so grateful to have been a part of it.

— WICHITA, KS

# Connecting with Diverse Populations

In order to gather stories that reflect the rich diversity of perspectives in our nation, StoryCorps depends on strong local partnerships—with community-based organizations in the cities where we annually tour and record, as well as with groups that focus specifically on amplifying voices that are often overlooked or marginalized.





# CONNECTING WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS



Credit: Ryan Dorgan

## The StoryCorps Mobile Tour: A Look Back on 2020

A retrospective from our Mobile team of recording highlights from each location that our tour visited, in-person and remotely, throughout the year.

Thanks to our new digital recording tools, in early 2020 StoryCorps successfully transitioned all of our interview collection programs to remote environments for the very first time. This allowed participants and our interview facilitators to come together safely and made it possible for us to continue to engage with local communities and capture personal accounts of this remarkable time in history.

## STORYCORPS MOBILE TOUR

Now in its sixteenth year traveling the country, the **StoryCorps Mobile Tour** made stops in 10 cities and towns across the western United States. After our shift to remote recording in the spring, we were able to work in partnership with our public media and community partners to reach interview participants in wider geographical regions than ever before, including those in more rural locations. The Mobile Tour team also hosted five virtual events during the tour to connect with and train partnering community organizations.

## STORYBOOTHS IN CHICAGO AND ATLANTA

Despite a switch to virtual operations, throughout 2020 our locations in **Chicago** and **Atlanta** collaborated with local organizations to preserve conversations from their respective communities and share produced stories in collaboration with WBEZ in Chicago and WABE in Atlanta. Thanks to a transition to remote recording tools, in 2020 these StoryBooths collected almost 300 conversations and hosted a series of community listening events.

**1,942**

signature (facilitated)  
interviews in 2020

**81,437**

All time

**3,250**

signature (facilitated)  
interview participants  
in 2020

**145,935**

All time



# CONNECTING WITH DIVERSE POPULATIONS



Credit: Megan Jett

## AMERICAN PATHWAYS

Launched in 2020, **American Pathways** is a two-year initiative to celebrate the stories and contributions of both Muslims living in America, and specific immigrant groups including asylees, refugees, and DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals), TPS (Temporary Protected Status), and DED (Deferred Enforced Departure) recipients. The project highlights stories of everyday refugees, asylees, immigrants, and Muslims including: doctors, teachers, and cab drivers; parents, children, and families.

The recordings are preserved in two collections in the StoryCorps Archive at the Library of Congress: the Tapestry of Voices Collection and the Anwar Collection of Muslim Voices, named in memory of beloved StoryCorps producer Liyna Anwar, who died in March 2020 of acute myeloid leukemia.

## MILITARY VOICES INITIATIVE

Facilitated by a partnership between StoryCorps and veterans service organizations across the country, the **Military Voices Initiative** provides a platform for veterans, service members, and military families to share their stories. In 2020, using a mix of in-person and virtual formats, our staff recorded interviews and hosted virtual events in Las Cruces, New Mexico; Raleigh, Durham, and Chapel Hill NC; and across Wisconsin.



# VIRTUAL EVENTS & PARTNERSHIPS

## COMMUNITY LISTENING EVENTS & PARTNERSHIPS

In 2020, our programs teams partnered with hundreds of organizations across the country to connect with local communities and preserve their conversations. Some of these partnerships culminated in live listening events: opportunities to bring partners and the public together to listen to community stories, explore the StoryCorps interview experience, and talk about the power of preserving our voices. Here are just a few partnerships and events StoryCorps facilitated in 2020.



### STORYCORPS CHICAGO

#### **Stories of Arts Resilience: Virtual Event**

This virtual gathering invited community members to listen to stories of museum and arts professionals' firsthand responses to the COVID-19 crisis, their shared struggles, and the perseverance that has since emerged in Chicago's arts and culture industry. The storytelling session was followed by a discussion led by former sociology professor Dr. Ada Cheng.

#### **Towns of Alton and Robbins, Illinois: Community Partnership**

StoryCorps Chicago partnered with two Illinois towns rich in African American history and culture to record and preserve the stories of their communities. The Alton partnership featured stories from longtime community members, including memories of sharecropping and the town's stop on the Underground Railroad. Stories recorded in partnership with Robbins, one of the nation's oldest incorporated African American communities, focused on the town's role as an economic hub, supporting Black entrepreneurship, competition, and wealth creation.



### STORYCORPS ATLANTA

#### **Listening as Comfort Food: Virtual Event**

In spring 2020, StoryCorps Atlanta partnered with the Alif Institute, whose mission is to cultivate an appreciation of Arab cultures, especially through the arts. The event featured stories about friendship and perseverance, including edited recordings from Alif Institute members and a video created by the Alif youth group.

#### **Atlanta Corona Collective: Community Partnership**

The Atlanta History Center, the host organization of our Atlanta StoryBooth, launched the Corona Collective to compile stories and physical artifacts from the local community during the COVID-19 crisis. In the months that followed, as tens of thousands took to the streets, the scope of the project expanded to reflect racial justice concerns and demands. Together with the Atlanta History Center, our Atlanta staff hosted a virtual event sharing opportunities for people to share their stories.



# Expanding Access to the StoryCorps Method



To serve our mission of building a more compassionate world through the power of listening, StoryCorps shares our methods and best practices for conducting, preserving, and sharing personal voices and stories with individuals and groups. These opportunities range from bespoke presentations, workshops, and trainings to self-guided resource kits and opportunities to engage online with others conducting do-it-yourself projects.



# EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE STORYCORPS METHOD

After the onset of the pandemic and throughout 2020, StoryCorps adapted our trainings and resources to meet the context of the moment, with a focus on teaching groups and individuals in education, public media, libraries, and social services to use StoryCorps Connect to preserve conversations remotely.



## Dr. Anthony Fauci Invites You to Use StoryCorps Connect

In support of The Great Thanksgiving Listen, Dr. Fauci recorded this short video that we used as a tool for engaging individuals to participate online.

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING LISTEN

In 2020, StoryCorps hosted our fifth annual **The Great Thanksgiving Listen** campaign, which invites students and people of all ages to record an interview with a grandparent or other loved one over Thanksgiving weekend. Using either the **StoryCorps App**—which enables people to record and archive in-person interviews using a mobile device—or the remote capacities of StoryCorps Connect, participants were able to interview loved ones safely and seamlessly while socially distanced.

In spite of the challenging circumstances of 2020, the Thanksgiving holiday remained an important moment in which to listen and share in conversations, whether they were in person or across great geographic distances. Thanks to a range of national partners and grassroots outreach, and a suite of resources adapted for educators during the pandemic, we gathered more than 13,000 conversations, more than a third of which were recorded remotely.

“The best part is always hearing from students about what a meaningful assignment this is. They connect to parents and grandparents in ways they never thought possible, they learn things that impact their understanding of themselves, and they have a keepsake (the recording and selfie) of that relationship. Some students have completed the interview early because they had a family member who would not live much longer and they wanted to complete this interview with them. These interviews change students’ lives, and I get to learn about the rich tapestry that is America.”

– PARTICIPATING EDUCATOR, THE GREAT  
THANKSGIVING LISTEN

# EXPANDING ACCESS TO THE STORYCORPS METHOD

## STORYCORPS DIY

The **StoryCorps DIY** platform provides a growing suite of self-directed multimedia resources for groups that want to engage in community-based recording activities and create their own sustainable interview collection projects. Throughout 2020, StoryCorps offered free webinars to train new users in the platform and provide them with publicly available resources.

## STORYCORPS LEGACY

Through partnerships with hospitals and clinics, pediatric centers, hospice and palliative care departments, and disease-specific organizations, **StoryCorps Legacy** enables people with serious illness and their families to record, preserve, and share their stories. StoryCorps trainings help participating organizations incorporate the StoryCorps experience into their existing services and conduct and record interviews using StoryCorps equipment. In 2020, StoryCorps concluded **Resilience: Memories That Move Us Forward**, a storytelling and listening program in partnership with the New York Life Foundation that helps children cope with the death of a parent, sibling, loved one, or friend.

## OTHER TRAININGS AND RESOURCES

Additional resources for those looking to engage with StoryCorps resources and staff that were active in 2020 include the **Storytelling in Healthcare Facebook group**, a collaboration with Providence Health Care's Institute for Human Caring, and the **StoryCorps in the Classroom Facebook group** and **email newsletter**, which are active year-round with lesson plan suggestions for educators.



“ The work you do is essential nourishment for these times. I’m grateful to be able to lean into StoryCorps. ”

— INGER, LISTENER



# IN MEMORIAM

The need to distance ourselves physically during this pandemic year made mourning the losses of those we cherish harder, so the need to share our memories of those remarkable individuals and the impact their lives had on our community runs especially deep. We are heartbroken by the losses of former StoryCorps staffers Melvin Reeves and Liyna Anwar and StoryCorps board member Elizabeth McCormack. Their years of dedication and service to StoryCorps, its mission, and its programs and services are a testament to the power of shared story-telling through conversation and listening. Their presences are missed, but their spirits continue to guide us.



**MELVIN REEVES**  
(1951–2020)

Melvin Reeves came to StoryCorps after two decades working at the Red Cross, where he provided lifesaving services to New Yorkers in need—homeless people, families who experienced devastating disasters such as Hurricane Sandy, and surviving family members of 9/11 victims, among others. At StoryCorps, he spearheaded the creation of StoryCorps Griot, the largest U.S. collection of African American and Latino oral histories, and StoryCorpsU, an innovative education program that gave voice to thousands of low-income students of color. Following an injury and an extended illness, he passed away on November 3, 2020.



**LIYNA ANWAR**  
(1989–2020)

Liyna Anwar produced segments for StoryCorps on NPR for nearly seven years, traveling the country recording and creating audio profiles highlighting everyday people and their lives. Prior to her StoryCorps tenure, she produced news segments at APM's *Marketplace*, NPR's Weekend *All Things Considered*, and local Southern California affiliates KPCC and KCRW. She joined the *Los Angeles Times* as a senior podcast producer in 2018. She was diagnosed with leukemia that same year and died after a two-year battle with the disease on March 26, 2020. The Muslim perspectives gathered through our new American Pathways initiative will be preserved at the Library of Congress in the Anwar Collection of Muslim Voices, named in Liyna's memory.

Photo credit: Kirk McKay/LA Times



**ELIZABETH MCCORMACK**  
(1922–2020)

Elizabeth McCormack spent 30 years as a Roman Catholic nun, but came to question and challenge church policy and teachings on a number of issues, eventually leaving the church in 1974. As the president of Manhattanville College during the 1960s and early 1970s, her implementation of forward-thinking changes transformed the elite Catholic women's institution into a nondenominational, co-ed center of higher education. At the age of 54, she married Jerry Aron, a divorced Jewish father of five children. After her departure from Manhattanville, she shifted to a philanthropic focus, serving as an advisor on humanitarian giving for the Rockefeller family and numerous major national foundations. An engaged and beloved StoryCorps Board member and mentor, she died on December 4, 2020, at the age of 98.

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Make America Dinner Again

“

Have been in a funny headspace recently, but binge-watching your videos has restored my faith in humankind and I feel like I'm brimming with empathy and compassion. Thank you for reminding us all, regardless of where we're from, that the human story is often unpredictable, gut-wrenching and unjust, but also unique, colorful and marked more than anything by our love and warmth for others. I am proud to be human again; thank you.

”

— JAMES, DONOR



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“ Thank you for those great animations you post on YouTube. I work at the ER, and due to this whole mess caused by the current global situation, I’m overloaded with work. Those short videos are precious for me. They help me relax for a short moment and make me feel a bit better. ”

— KRZYSIEK, LISTENER

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“ This is a momentous time  
that will be written about for  
ages to come. We should be  
gathering stories. Thanks for  
all that you do. ”

— JULIE, DONOR

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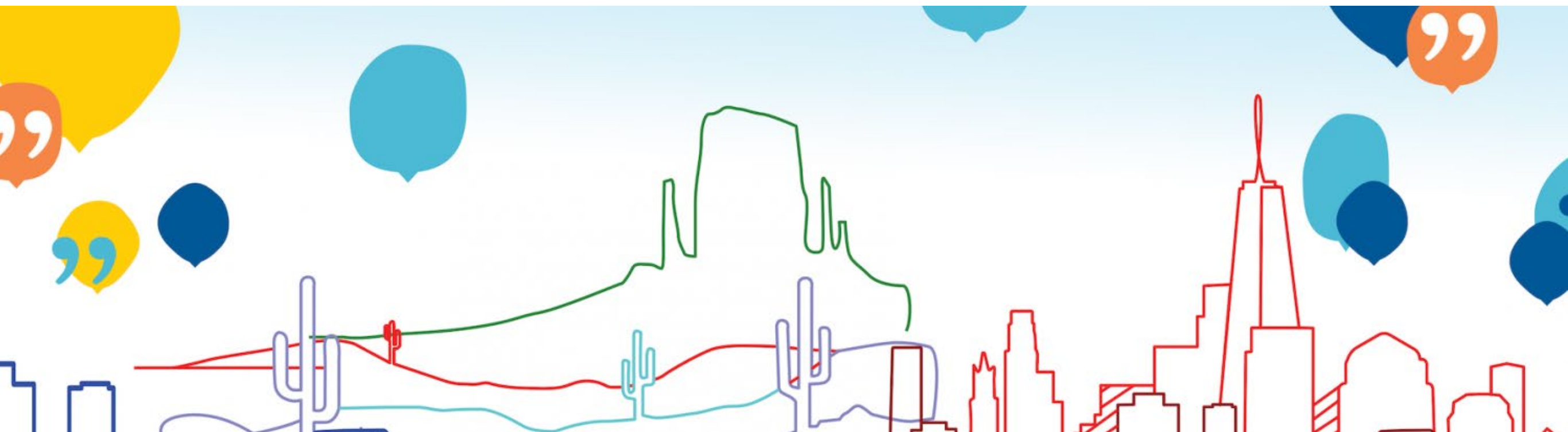
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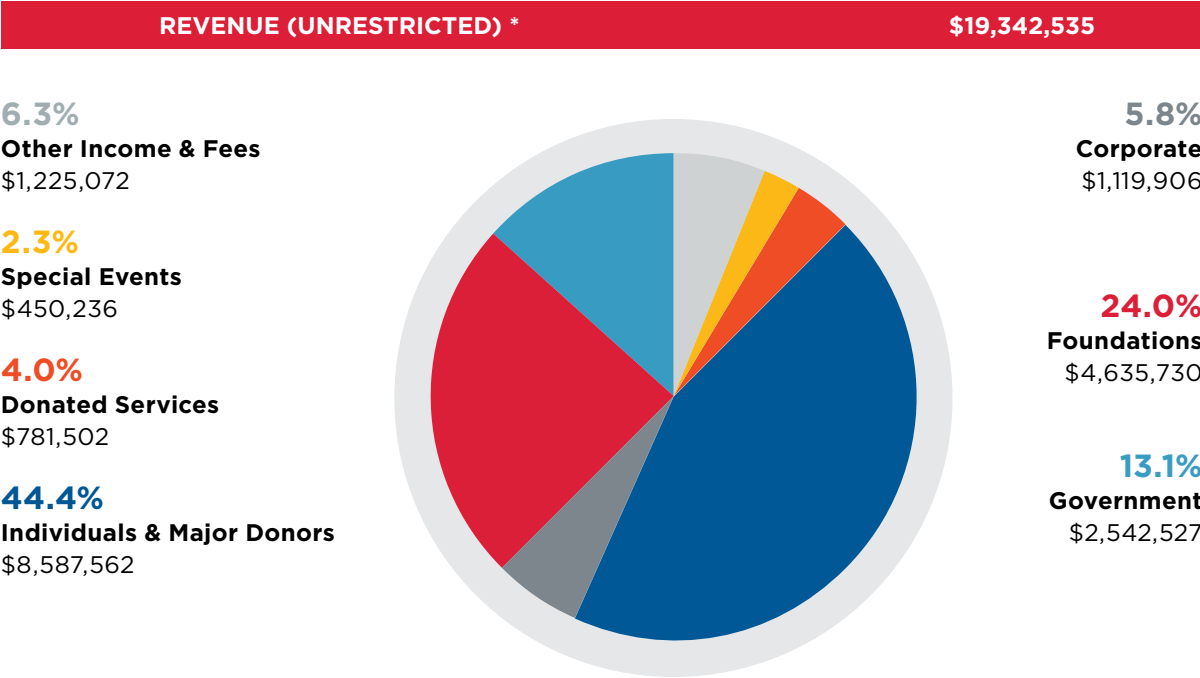
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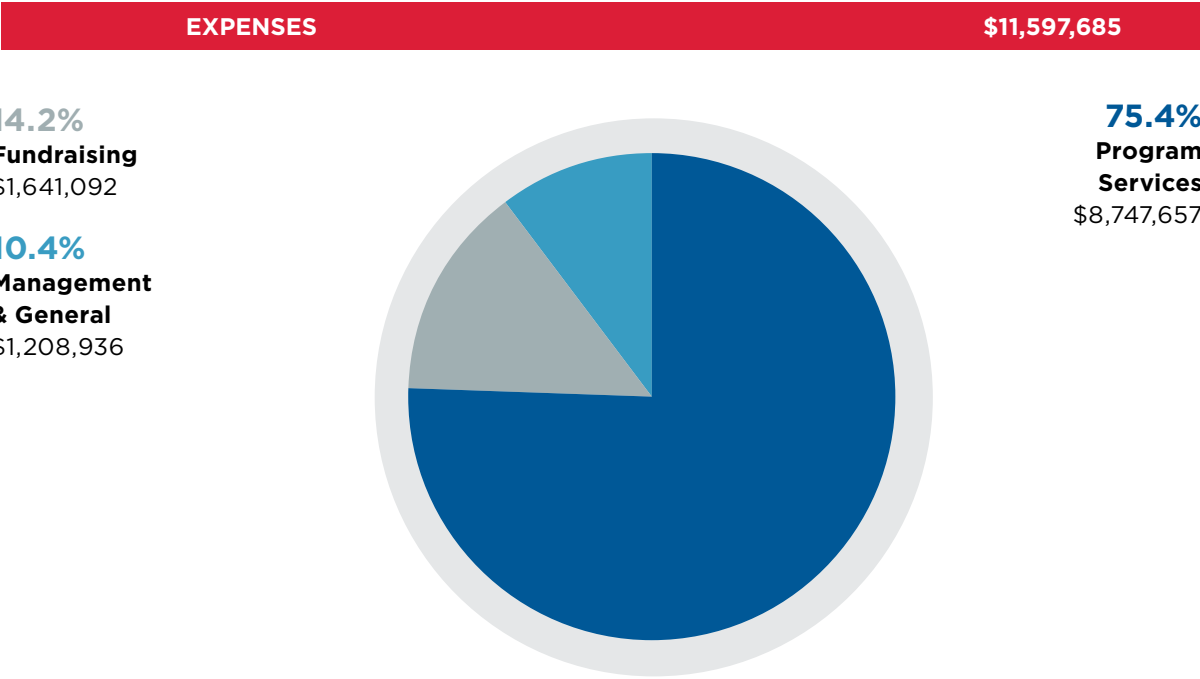
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# FINANCIALS 2020



\* In 2020 StoryCorps received two significant one-time gifts that will not reoccur.



ASSETS	
Cash & Cash Equivalents	\$9,131,369
Investments	\$ 3,748,438
Unconditional Promises to Give	\$4,633,313
Other Receivables	\$309,931
Prepaid Expenses & Other Assets	\$264,340
Property & Equipment, net	\$170,528
Security Deposits	\$77,521
Total Assets	\$18,335,440

LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS	
Liabilities	
Accounts Payable & Accrued Expenses	\$580,843
Deferred Revenue	\$452,075
PPP Loan	\$1,000,000
Loans Payable	\$3,893
Promissory Note Payable	\$872,183
Total Liabilities	\$2,908,994
Net Assets	
Net Assets without donor restrictions	\$10,311,704
Net Assets with donor restrictions	\$5,114,742
Total Net Assets	\$15,426,446
Total Liabilities & Net Assets	\$18,335,440



**“There’s a place for shouting, but there’s also a  
place for whispering in people’s ears...  
Change can happen that way, too.”**

**— DAVE ISAY,**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS,  
MARCH 30, 2021

