



## ISC's Year in Review 2021

*It has become an ISC tradition to take a moment at the end of the year to tell you about the organization's activities and accomplishments. On one level, it's an opportunity to brag, because we're very proud of our work. On another, it's an exercise in affirmation, because we rarely take time during our busy days to celebrate our achievements. Perhaps most profoundly, it's a chance to practice gratitude—to you, to our tellers, to our funders and partners, and to our friends around the world. It's our sincere belief that storytelling is a powerful source of joy, solace, and community. Here's a glimpse at some of the important work we did together in 2021.*



In 2021, we sought even more opportunities to connect with our audience from afar. We produced two full seasons of “**Storytelling Online**,” our virtual adaptation of the **Teller-in-Residence** series. And we attracted a broader, more geographically diverse viewership than ever, with people all over the country and abroad tuning in.

### Connecting with Our Audience

Last year, in response to the COVID crisis, ISC built a state-of-the-art online platform to bring our award-winning storytelling events into your living room. That groundwork stood us in good stead through the second year of the pandemic. (Almost all of ISC's programming remained online in 2021.) Throughout this unpredictable process, our team more than maintained ISC's commitment to excellence—and you noticed.

“I have attended a lot of online events since COVID started and yours was the best,” a member of our audience wrote, reflecting on the 49th annual National Storytelling Festival. “I was amazed that the tellers could be so dynamic and engaging without a tent audience before them...and at how easy the website was to navigate.”



Connie Regan-Blake



Josh Goforth

### Supporting Young People

We know that many kids have struggled to adapt to the demands of virtual learning and limited socializing during the pandemic. Whenever possible, we conducted our educational programs and outreach activities in person in 2021. Our **Shero's Journey Day Camp** for tween girls returned to the ISC campus this summer. And we hosted the third annual **Young Appalachian Story Summit** in September, inviting young adults to network and share big ideas for the future of Appalachia.

Our outreach work in local school systems continued with a pilot program for economically disadvantaged elementary students. For kids and parents who couldn't take advantage of in-person programming, we continued to produce our popular **Story Guides**, a free and easy-to-use learning tool for educators and families.



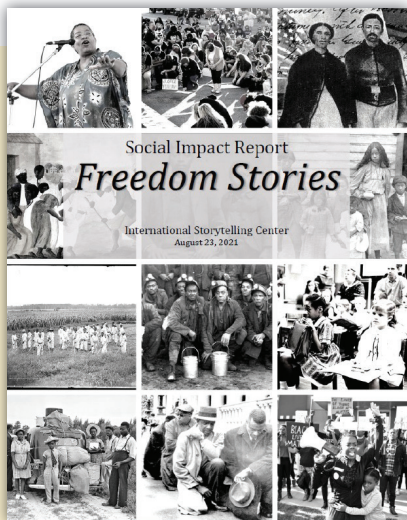
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## The Freedom Stories Grand Finale

ISC's two-year **Freedom Stories** project has officially concluded! Funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and led by project director Dr. Alicestyne Turley, we designed Freedom Stories to explore the Black heritage of Appalachia through a series of public discussions and storytelling performances.

Our final panel discussion, which was in June, focused on how to continue community conversations as the project drew to a close. To that end, our Freedom Stories online toolkit will remain available on the ISC website, where it is free to all.

While we originally designed Freedom Stories as a series of in-person events, the pandemic forced us to move the discussion online. This turned out to be a gift, helping us reach a global audience that exceeded our wildest expectations. The ISC team presented the project to the Biden-Harris Arts and Humanities Transition Team in 2020, and to members of Congress, including the Congressional Black Caucus and the Congressional Appalachian Caucus, in 2021.



## Big Plans for the Future

Next October, ISC will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the **National Storytelling Festival**. This organizational milestone will be all the more poignant as our first in-person Festival since 2019. We can't wait to reunite with you here in Jonesborough to celebrate half a century of storytelling excellence.



In the meantime, 2021 has been an exciting year for institutional expansion with the hire of our new Director of Development, Ben Weakley. Building on ISC's long-standing partnerships with iconic institutions like the Library of Congress, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Humanities, Ben will continue to cultivate relationships with large foundations and coordinate the major gifts that will help ISC scale up its worldwide operations.

*Thank you for being part  
of the ISC story.*

INTERNATIONAL STORYTELLING CENTER

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*In association with the Smithsonian Institution*