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NEWS RELEASE

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O'Day Short Family Story to Reach New Audiences Through Public Media Partnership

FONTANA, CA – The powerful civil rights story of the O'Day Short family, whose legacy led Fontana Unified School District to rename Randall Pepper Elementary School in their honor in August 2025, will reach new audiences through a five-year public media partnership with PBS, NPR, and FNX. The short documentary, "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice," will air on the networks' programming lines and streaming services beginning this fall, helping preserve the family's story for generations to come.

The film was produced by award-winning producers E'lan West and George Sharperson, with research contributions from Fontana Unified Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Clarissa Trejo.

"For George and me, this partnership is bigger than a distribution milestone. It represents an opportunity for the O'Day Short family's courage to live beyond the film itself," West said. "More than eighty years later, people will hear their names, learn what happened, and understand why their story still matters. That is the purpose of this documentary. That is the legacy we hope to protect."

In 1945, O'Day Short and his wife, Helen, purchased and built a home in Fontana in a neighborhood where African Americans were unwelcome, but the O'Day Short family was lighter-skinned and blended in with the community. Eventually, they faced threats and pressure to leave, but refused to give in. On Dec. 16, their home was set ablaze in an act of arson, and all four members of the family – O'Day, Helen, and their two children, Barry and Carol Ann – died from injuries sustained in the fire.

In 1950, Randall Pepper Elementary was built on the site where the Short family's house once stood. Decades later, then-elementary student Cyrus Moss learned about the Short family's story and set out to make a change. In March 2024, Moss launched a petition campaign to rename the school in the family's honor, gathering 132 signatures. The Fontana Unified Board of Education unanimously voted to rename the school O'Day Short Elementary, effective at the start of the 2025-26 school year.

Moss and O'Day Short Elementary were honored by the Equal Justice Initiative in May 2026 with a Community Remembrance Award, recognizing their efforts to preserve the legacy of the Short family.

"The story of the O'Day Short family is one that deserves to be remembered – not only because of the tragedy they endured, but because of the courage they demonstrated," Trejo said. "As someone who has spent my career in communications, I understand the responsibility that comes with telling stories that have the power to educate, connect communities, and preserve history."

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The documentary has received recognition for its compelling portrayal of the Short family's story, earning a nomination in the "Best Documentary Short" category from Touchstone Independent Film Festival. Through the five-year public media partnership, "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice" will provide audiences with a chance to learn about the Short family's story and history, and the lasting impact of their legacy in Fontana.

Visit the ["O'Day Short: An Act of Justice"](#) website for more information on the documentary and the O'Day Short family story.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_ODAYSHORT1: Relatives of the O'Day and Helen Short family pose in front of a dedication mural during the 2025 renaming ceremony for O'Day Short Elementary School. The school was built on the site where the Short family's home once stood.

FUSD_ODAYSHORT2: Equal Justice Initiative Senior Attorney Jennifer Taylor (left) presented a Community Remembrance Award to O'Day Short Elementary and Fontana Unified student Cyrus Moss (center) for their efforts to preserve the Short family's legacy. Fontana Unified Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Clarissa Trejo (right) also contributed to preserving the family's history through the documentary, "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice," which will air on PBS, NPR, and FNX.

FUSD_ODAYSHORT3: A relative of the O'Day Short family (left) sits with award-winning producers George Sharperson (center) and E'lan West (right), who are executive producers of, "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice."

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