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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Oct. 21, 2026

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O'Day Short Family Documentary to Air on PBS

FONTANA, CA – The story of the O'Day Short family, whose legacy continues to shape how Fontana remembers its history, will reach new audiences with the PBS debut of "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice" at 6:30 p.m. PDT, Friday, Oct. 23, on PBS KCVR. The documentary highlights the family's history and the community's efforts to honor their lives and preserve their legacy for future generations.

Produced by award-winning filmmakers E'Ian West and George Sharperson, the film will be distributed through a five-year public media partnership with PBS, NPR, and FNX. Fontana Unified School District Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Clarissa Trejo contributed research to the documentary.

"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."

In 1945, O'Day and Helen Short built a home in Fontana in a neighborhood where African Americans faced discrimination. After enduring threats and pressure to leave, the family's home was set ablaze. O'Day, Helen, and their two children, Barry and Carol Ann, later died from injuries sustained in the fire.

Randall Pepper Elementary School was built on the site in 1950. Decades later, student Cyrus Moss learned about the family's history and began working to honor their legacy. In March 2024, Moss launched a petition to rename the school in the family's honor, gathering 132 signatures. The Fontana Unified Board of Education unanimously approved the change, and O'Day Short Elementary School began the 2025-26 school year with its new name.

In May 2026, Moss and O'Day Short Elementary received a Community Remembrance Award from the Equal Justice Initiative in recognition of their efforts to preserve the family's story. Their work reflects the role students and schools can play in helping communities learn from the past and keep important local history alive.

"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. "Stories like theirs can educate communities and help preserve history for future generations."

The documentary was also nominated for Best Documentary Short at the Touchstone Independent Film Festival.

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Learn more about the film and the O'Day Short family on the "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice" website.

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

FUSD_ODAYSHORT1: Relatives of the O'Day and Helen Short family gather in front of a dedication mural during the 2025 renaming ceremony for O'Day Short Elementary School, built on the site of the family's former home.

FUSD_ODAYSHORT2: Equal Justice Initiative Senior Attorney Jennifer Taylor (left) presents a Community Remembrance Award to O'Day Short Elementary and Fontana Unified student Cyrus Moss (center) in May 2026. Fontana Unified Executive Director of Marketing and Communications Clarissa Trejo (right) contributed research to "O'Day Short: An Act of Justice," which debuts on PBS KCVR on Oct. 23.

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

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