

OKLAHOMA CITY

Official Selection 2017
sundance
film festival

1 x 120 HD

RUBY RIDGE

ARYAN NATIONS

ALAN BERG MURDERED

TRUCK RENTAL

TOVEX

168 KILLED

NITROMETHANE

WACO

BOMB ASSEMBLY

NICHOLS FARM

BRADY BILL SIGNED

BASIC TRAINING

A CAUTIONARY
TALE OF

HATE IN AMERICA



PBS

INTERNATIONAL



OKLAHOMA CITY

1 x 120 HD

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Oklahoma City explores the intertwined narratives of the worst domestic terrorist attack in the U.S. and the anti-government movement that inspired the actions of Timothy McVeigh, including two standoffs with law enforcement with tragic outcomes—Ruby Ridge and the Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas. On April 19, 1995, McVeigh, a former soldier deeply influenced by the literature and ideas of the radical right, set off a truck bomb that destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 168 people and injuring 675 others. Drawing upon a rich news archive of the events, including more than 60 hours of audio from jailhouse interviews with McVeigh, *Oklahoma City* traces the events that led McVeigh to that day and recounts the stories of survivors, first responders, U.S. Marshals, FBI investigators and journalists who covered the attack. The film also provides an in-depth and provocative exploration of the extremist anti-government movement that rose to prominence in the 1990s and still makes news today.

Oklahoma City begins in the 1980s, when a small number of far-right extremist groups began to organize. These groups—notably Aryan Nations and its paramilitary spinoff, The Order—perpetrated a series of violent crimes including bank robberies, bombings and murders, alerting the FBI to a rising threat and contributing to a psychology of conspiracy and confrontation on both sides.

Born in Pendleton, New York, McVeigh learned about guns and shooting from his grandfather. A skinny teenager, “Noodle McVeigh” was teased in high school, inspiring a lifelong hatred of bullies. Following graduation, he enlisted in the Army, and while serving in Iraq during the first Gulf War became disillusioned with both the military and the U.S. government. As a sharpshooter, he shot and killed Iraqi soldiers but felt he’d been given inadequate reason for doing so.

Summoned from Iraq by the Army to attend Ranger School, McVeigh was dismissed because he wasn’t in top physical condition. Returning to Pendleton, he had difficulty finding a job, becoming further isolated and disillusioned. He was deeply influenced by reading *The Turner Diaries*, a 1978 novel by neo-Nazi leader William Pierce, which depicted a violent revolution to overthrow the federal government, including scenes of a truck bomb blowing up FBI headquarters, killing hundreds of people.

McVeigh embarked on an odyssey across the country, attending gun shows, meeting white supremacists and immersing himself in far-right literature. He showed up during the Waco standoff, and was enraged by what he viewed as a government massacre. Galvanized, McVeigh began to put in motion his plan to “punish” the federal government by bombing the Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City.

Woven through the narrative of McVeigh’s radicalization is the story of the immediate aftermath of the bombing itself, told through the recollections of survivors. In the minutes and hours after the explosion, first responders poured into the ruins, pulling the wounded and dead from the rubble. At the same time, investigators launched the largest manhunt in American history, involving hundreds of agents and thousands of leads. Within three days, McVeigh had been captured.

Oklahoma City ends with the trial, conviction and execution of Timothy McVeigh. Hoping to trigger a second American Revolution against an oppressive government, McVeigh instead humanized the ordinary men and women, fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, who make up the federal government.

AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

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CREDITS

Writer and Director: Barak Goodman

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