**American Experience *Taken Hostage***

**Premieres November 14 & 15, 2022, on PBS and Streaming on** [**PBS.org**](https://www.pbs.org/)

 **New Four-Hour, Two-Part Documentary About the Iran Hostage Crisis**

 **and Its Roots From Acclaimed Filmmaker Robert Stone**

(BOSTON, MA) — Unfolding like a political thriller, ***Taken Hostage*** is a riveting four-hour two-part documentary film about the Iran hostage crisis, when 52 American diplomats, Marines and civilians were taken hostage at the American Embassy in Tehran on November 4, 1979. For the next 444 days, the world watched as the United States received a daily barrage of humiliation, vitriol and hatred from a country that had long been one of our closest allies. The crisis would transform both the U.S. and Iran and forever upend the focus and direction of American foreign policy. Premiering Monday & Tuesday, November 14 & 15, 9:00-11:00 p.m. ET ([check local listings](http://www.pbs.org/tv_schedules/)) on PBS, [PBS.org](http://www.pbs.org) and the [PBS Video app](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/), ***Taken Hostage***, a film by Robert Stone, is executive produced by Cameo George. It is Stone’s ninth project for **American Experience**, following the critically-acclaimed, award-winning *Chasing the Moon*.

***Taken Hostage*** also explores the backstory of how America became mired in the Middle East and the nation’s role in igniting the firestorm that has consumed the most strategically important part of the world for the last 40 years. Part One chroniclesAmerica’s quarter-century of unwavering support for its ally, the Shah of Iran, despite his dictatorial and increasingly brutal and corrupt regime. The film traces the Shah’s program to rapidly modernize and westernize Iran in the span of a single generation and portrays in harrowing detail the violent Islamic revolution that overthrew the Shah in 1979, sending shockwaves around the world. Part Two explores the holding of the hostages at the American embassy in Tehran by militant Islamic students, with the support and encouragement of the Iranian government led by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini. The film details how the crisis degenerated into what is arguably the most consequential foreign policy debacle of the second half of the 20th century. The Iran Hostage Crisis laid the groundwork for the modern 24-hour news cycle, inspired an escalating cycle of political terrorism and brought down the presidency of Jimmy Carter.

***Taken Hostage*** is told largely through the lens of the exceptional love story of former hostage Barry Rosen and his wife Barbara, who was suddenly thrust into the public eye as the crisis dragged on. Other key figures are Hilary Brown and Carole Jerome, two pioneering female foreign correspondents who risked their lives to uncover the truth of what was happening in Iran. Jerome had remarkable inside access to the highest levels of the Iranian government through her relationship with Iran’s foreign minister and chief hostage negotiator, Sadegh Ghotbzadeh, who lost his life trying to stop the Iranian Revolution from devolving into a tyrannical theocracy. Gary Sick, a senior member of President Carter’s national security team and longtime Iran expert, recounts how the crisis engulfed the American government and consumed Carter’s presidency. Utilizing recently declassified military documents and an interview with Colonel James Q. Roberts, a member of the top-secret American commando unit, the film reveals details of the failed attempt to rescue the hostages in a daring Special Forces operation. With no narration, ***Taken Hostage*** uses the candid, personal testimony of those whose lives were upended to tell the story of these dramatic, history-making events.

“This extraordinary new film explores America’s first encounter with radical Islam, placing the hostage crisis within a larger historical context and helping us to understand the complex roots of a conflict still being waged today,” said **American Experience** executive producer Cameo George. “It also tells the moving story of ordinary people swept up in the tide of history—people of great strength and remarkable courage.”

**American Experience*****Taken Hostage*** will stream simultaneously with broadcast on all station-branded PBS platforms, including [PBS.org](http://pbs.org/) and the [PBS Video app](https://www.pbs.org/pbs-video-app/), available on iOS, Android, Roku, Apple TV, Amazon Fire TV, Android TV, Samsung Smart TV, Chromecast and VIZIO. All titles will also be available for streaming with closed captioning in English and Spanish.

**Episode Descriptions**

**Part One** (Monday, November 14) chronicles America’s attempt to remake Iran in its image, beginning with the 1953 overthrow of the first democratically elected government in Iran, orchestrated by British and American forces, and America’s subsequent support for the dictatorial regime of the Shah of Iran. The episode culminates with the violent Iranian Revolution of 1978-79 that toppled the Shah and established a fundamentalist theocracy led by Ayatollah Khomeini.

**Part Two** (Tuesday, November 15) uses eyewitness testimony to follow the harrowing 444-day standoff between the U.S. and Iran over the holding of 52 hostages at the American embassy in Tehran from November 1979 to January 1981. The Iran Hostage Crisis would permanently rupture relations between the two countries and ignite a growing anti-American militancy across the Muslim world, setting the stage for the attacks of 9/11.

**About the Participants**

**Hilary Brown** was the first female foreign correspondent for ABC News and reported from Iran during the heyday of the Shah’s regime, returning in 1979 to report on the Iran Hostage Crisis. She is the author of *War Tourist: Memoirs of a Foreign Correspondent.*

**Carole Jerome** is a former foreign correspondent for the Canadian Broadcasting Company. She reported from Iran during the hostage crisis and gained exclusive access into the inner workings of the Iranian regime. She is the author of *The Man in the Mirror: A True Inside Story of Revolution, Love and Treachery in Iran.*

**Stephen Kinzer** is a former foreign correspondent for *The New York Times* and author of *Overthrow: America’s Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq* and *All the Shah’s Men: An American Coup and the Roots of Middle East Terror*.

**Colonel James Q. Roberts** is a former U.S. Army and intelligence officer based at the U.S. embassy in Tehran during the Iranian Revolution. Returning to the U.S. prior to the embassy takeover, he took part in the failed mission to rescue the hostages. He has since served as a counterterrorism expert under the Secretary of Defense. As a teenager, he spent time in Iran as the son of an American oil worker.

**Barbara Rosen** became an eloquent and compelling spokesperson for her husband Barry and his fellow hostages during the crisis, using the media to keep their plight before the eyes of the world.

**Barry Rosen** was the U.S. Embassy’s Press Attaché in Iran when he was taken hostage. He was held for 444 days. In the late 1960s, Barry served in Iran as a member of the Peace Corps, where he became fluent in Farsi and became thoroughly enamored with Iranian history and culture.

**Gary Sick** served on the National Security Council staff under Presidents Ford, Carter and Reagan. He was the principal White House aide for Iran during the Iranian Revolution and the hostage crisis, and is the author of two books on U.S. relations with Iran.

**American Experience *Taken Hostage***

A Film by Robert Stone

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| **Written, Produced and Directed by****Co-Producer****Archive Producer****Music by****Edited by** | ROBERT STONENARIMAN HAMEDRICHARD LEWITGARY LIONELLIBRETT BANKS & LINDY JANKURA |

**American Experience** is a production of **GBH Boston**

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| **Executive Producer** | CAMEO GEORGE |

**About the Filmmakers**

**Robert Stone (Writer, Producer, Director)** is an Oscar**®** nominee for best feature documentary, a three-time Emmy**®** nominee for exceptional merit in documentary filmmaking, and the recipient of many other awards and accolades for his work over three decades. He gained considerable recognition for his first film, *Radio Bikini* (1987), which premiered at the Sundance Film Festival and was nominated for an Academy Award**®**. His best-known work includes *Guerrilla: The Taking of Patty Hearst* (2004), which premiered at Sundance and went on to become one of the most highly acclaimed theatrical documentaries of the year. *Oswald’s Ghost* (2007) earned Stone his second Emmy nomination for outstanding achievement in non-fiction filmmaking. *Earth Days* (2009) premiered as the closing night film at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival and was released theatrically to wide critical acclaim. *Pandora’s Promise* (2013), an audience favorite at Sundance, gained worldwide acclaim and prompted considerable controversy within the environmental movement for its advocacy in favor of nuclear energy to fight climate change. Stone’s most recent work, *Chasing the Moon* (2019), is an epic political and social history of the race to the moon, broadcast on **American Experience** on PBS as a three-part six-hour miniseries to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first lunar landing. Broadcast in 13 countries on four continents, the film won the duPont-Columbia Award for broadcast journalism and earned Stone his third Emmy nomination for exceptional merit in documentary filmmaking. Stone also co-wrote, with Alan Andres, the companion book, *Chasing the Moon*, published by Random House. ***Taken Hostage*** is his ninth film for **American Experience**.

**Cameo George** (**Executive Producer,** **American Experience)** is an Emmy Award-winning producer, writer and journalist with more than 20 years of experience in documentary, broadcast television and digital content production. George has produced, developed and commissioned innovative programming at CNN, NBC News and ABC News. She was the senior producer of CNN’s groundbreaking series *Black in America* and *Latino in America* and executive producer of the eight-hour PBS documentary series 16 FOR '16: THE CONTENDERS, which was also broadcast on the BBC. George joined **American Experience** from ABC News, where she was head of development for long-form projects, responsible for creating a pipeline of docuseries and feature documentary films across Walt Disney Television platforms, including ABC News, Hulu, National Geographic and Disney+.

**About American Experience**

For more than 30 years, **American Experience** has been television’s most-watched history series, bringing to life the incredible characters and epic stories that have shaped America’s past and present. **American Experience** documentaries have been honored with every major broadcast award, including 30 Emmy Awards, five duPont-Columbia Awards and 19 George Foster Peabody Awards. PBS’s signature history series also creates original digital content that innovates new forms of storytelling to connect our collective past with the present. Cameo George is the series executive producer. **American Experience** is produced for PBS by GBH Boston. Visit [pbs.org/americanexperience](http://pbs.org/americanexperience) and follow us on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/AmericanExperiencePBS/), [Twitter](http://twitter.com/amexperiencepbs), [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/americanexperiencepbs/) and [YouTube](http://youtube.com/americanexperience) to learn more.

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