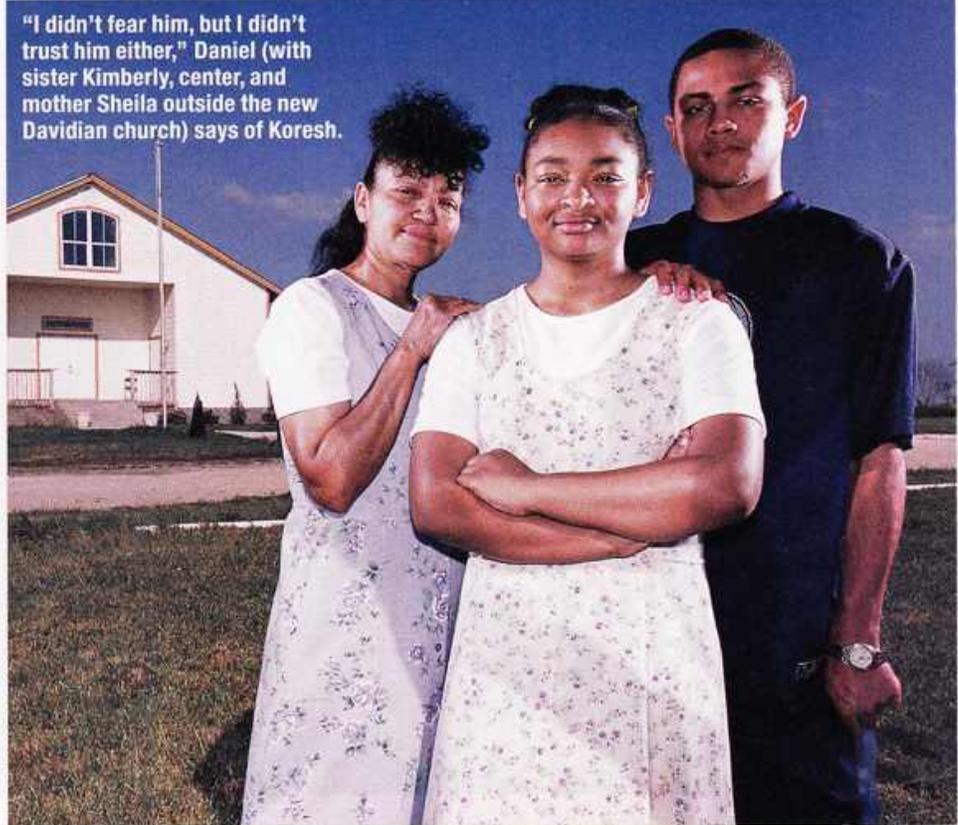


Ten Years After Waco

Young survivors of the fiery Branch Davidian tragedy try to heal and endure

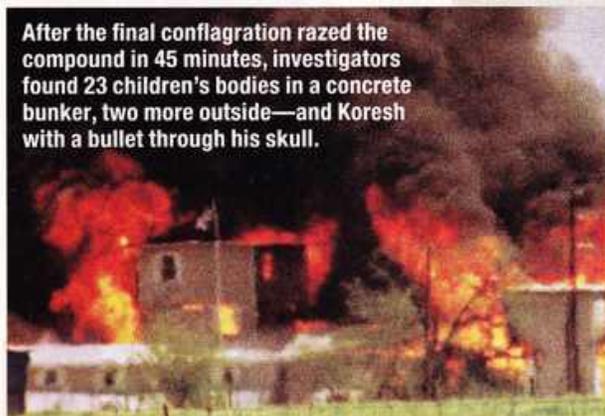


Cult head David Koresh told the FBI three times he would emerge—but didn't.



"I didn't fear him, but I didn't trust him either," Daniel (with sister Kimberly, center, and mother Sheila outside the new Davidian church) says of Koresh.

It was not the end that anyone wanted or expected—except, perhaps, for David Koresh, the fanatical leader of the Branch Davidians, a radical offshoot of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Ten years ago this month—on April 19, 1993—FBI agents tried to end a 51-day standoff by pumping tear gas into his cult's compound outside Waco, Texas. But the building erupted in flames and 75 Davidians—including Koresh and 25 children—stayed inside and died. The tragedy began nearly two months before, when federal agents attempted to arrest Koresh on weapons charges and ended up in a gun battle that killed four agents and at least six cult members. During the siege that followed, 21 children managed to escape. Today their lives remain forever marked by what happened.



After the final conflagration razed the compound in 45 minutes, investigators found 23 children's bodies in a concrete bunker, two more outside—and Koresh with a bullet through his skull.

The Martins

In a flash, they lost a father, four siblings—and their innocence

Sheila Martin takes her kids to church Saturdays at a chapel built in 2000 on the site of the original Branch Davidian compound. But son Daniel, a Waco high school sophomore, has little time for religion. "If you push a person too hard," he says, "they end up resisting." Still, he has sweet memories of his childhood on the compound—shooting BB guns, swimming in the pool and the time he and some other boys got caught rigging a soda machine to dispense drinks for free. (The relatively mild punishment: an hour-long time-out.) Though Daniel, then 6, Kimberly, 4, and brother Jamie, 11, fled the compound after the initial FBI raid (their mother left three weeks later), their father, Wayne, 42, and four siblings aged 13 to 20 perished in the fire. (Jamie died in 1998 after a long illness.) Although Kimberly likes studying the Bible at church, "I don't really care to learn anything about David," she says. "And I don't think he'll ever come back."

Photograph by MATTHEW MAHON

(part of a larger article)

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