**Osama Bin Laden Before 9-11**

**Early Life**

* Osama bin Mohammed bin Awad bin Ladenwas born in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.
* He was a son of Mohammed bin Awad bin Laden, a billionaire construction magnate with close ties to the Saudi royal family, and Mohammed bin Laden's tenth wife, Hamida
* In a 1998 interview, bin Laden gave his birth date as March 10, 1957.
* Mohammed bin Laden divorced Hamida soon after Osama bin Laden was born.
* The bin Laden family made $5 billion in the construction industry, of which Osama later inherited around 7$ million a year

**Young Adult Life**

* Bin Laden was raised as a devout **Wahhabi** Muslim, a form of strict Islam
* Bin Laden's father Mohammed died in 1967 in an airplane crash in Saudi Arabia when his American pilot misjudged a landing
* From 1968 to 1976, he attended the élite secular Al-Thager Model School.
* He studied economics and business administration at King Abdulaziz University.
* Some reports suggest he earned a degree in civil engineering in 1979, or a degree in public administration in 1981.
* One source described him as "hard working"; another said he left university during his third year without completing a college degree.
* At the university, bin Laden's main interest was religion, where he was involved in both "interpreting the Quran and jihad" and charitable work.
* He has been said to have had up to 6 wives with 20-26 children before his death and was described as a frugal man and strict father

**Start of Extremism**

* After leaving college in 1979, bin Laden went to Pakistan
* He joined **Abdullah Azzam** and used money and machinery from his own construction company to help the mujahedeen resistance in the Soviet war in Afghanistan.
* He later told a journalist: "I felt outraged that an injustice had been committed against the people of Afghanistan."
* Under **Operation Cyclone** from 1979 to 1989, the United States provided financial aid and weapons to the mujahedeen through Pakistan
* By 1984, bin Laden and Azzam established the **Afghan Services Bureau**, which funneled money, arms and fighters from around the Arab world into Afghanistan.
* bin Laden took part in a few battles in Afghanistan which led to many Arabs and Muslim to idolize him as a savior of Islam

**Al Qaeda**

* By 1988, bin Laden had split from the Afghan Services Bureau
* Azzam supported Afghan fighters, while bin Laden formed a separate fighting force called **Al Qaeda** or "The Base"
* Basically an organized Islamic faction, its goal is to lift the word of God, to make his religion victorious
* Following the Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989, Osama bin Laden returned to Saudi Arabia in 1990 as a hero of jihad.
* Along with his Arab legion, he was thought to have "brought down the mighty superpower" of the Soviet Union.

**Osama Rejects Saudi Arabia**

* The Iraqi invasion of Kuwait under Saddam Hussein on August 2, 1990, put the Saudi kingdom and the royal family at risk.
* Bin Laden met with Saudi Officials, telling them not to depend on assistance from the United States and others, and offering to help defend Saudi Arabia with Al Qaeda
* Bin Laden's offer was rebuffed, and the Saudi monarchy invited the deployment of U.S. forces in Saudi territory
* Bin Laden publicly denounced Saudi dependence on the U.S. military
* He argued the two holiest shrines of Islam, Mecca and Medina, the cities in which the Prophet Mohamed received Allah's message, should only be defended by Muslims.

**Sudan and Return to Afghanistan**

* In 1992 he went to live in exile in Sudan where he did charity work and opened training to Muslims who wanted to join Al Qaeda
* Due to the increasing pressure on Sudan from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and the United States, bin Laden was expelled from Sudan and permitted to leave for a country of his choice
* He chose to return to Afghanistan, where he had helped rid the country of the Soviets
* Some intelligence sources argue that the expulsion left bin Laden without an option other than becoming a full-time radical with the 300 Al Qaeda members who left with him.
* In **August 1996**, bin Laden declared war against the United States because they were still occupying parts of Saudi Arabia even after defeating Saddam Hussein in Kuwait
* Bin Laden's view was that "the 'evils' of the Middle East arose from America's attempt to take over the region and from its support for Israel
* It was only after this time that Osama bin Laden began funding terrorist plots and issuing statements to Muslims to kill Americans whenever and wherever they could