



# Martyr of Loray Mill: Ella May and the 1929 Textile Workers' Strike in Gastonia, North Carolina

*Kristina Horton*

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Union organizer and balladeer Ella May became a martyr for workers nationwide when she was murdered on her way to a union meeting in Gastonia, North Carolina, at age 28. A mother of nine and bookkeeper for the communist-led National Textile Workers Union, May worked to organize fellow mill workers in Gaston County. Her efforts to organize black workers--along with her brash, outspoken manner--incensed the local community and she was shot by an anti-union vigilante group on September 14, 1929.

Written by her great-granddaughter, this book tells Ella May's story, including her involvement in the Loray Mill Strike, the largest communist-led strike on American soil. Her most famous ballad, "Mill Mother's Lament," reveals her motivation: "It is for our little children."

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