



# From Selma to Sorrow: The Life and Death of Viola Liuzzo

*Mary Stanton*

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More than thirty years after the murder of Viola Liuzzo by the Ku Klux Klan, she remains an enigma. Some saw her as a dedicated civil rights worker, others as a troubled housewife. Some thought she was a victim of random violence and government conspiracy, while others thought she was an unfit mother who got what she deserved.

*From Selma to Sorrow* is the first full-length biography of the only white woman honored at the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery. Born and reared in the South, Liuzzo moved to Detroit as an adult. At the time of her death she was married to a high-ranking Teamster and had five children. While a part-time student at Wayne State University she became involved in civil rights protests and decided to participate in a voting rights march in Selma, Alabama. On March 25, 1965, Liuzzo and a young black man named Leroy Moton were on their way from Selma to Montgomery after the march. Klansmen followed Liuzzo's car along Highway 80 for twenty miles, then pulled alongside and fired shots. Liuzzo was killed instantly and Moton, covered with her blood, escaped by pretending to be dead when the killers returned.

Because this group of Klansmen included an FBI informant, Liuzzo lost her life in more ways than one. To deflect attention and to cover up his recklessness in permitting a known violent racist to work undercover during the march, J. Edgar Hoover crafted a malicious public relations campaign that unfairly portrayed Liuzzo as an unstable woman who abandoned her family to stir up trouble in the South. The years of unrelenting accusations, innuendos, and lies nearly destroyed her husband and five children.

In *From Selma to Sorrow* Mary Stanton searches for the truth about Liuzzo's life and death, using extensive interviews, public records, and FBI case files to tell a startling story of murder, betrayal, and passion.

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