



# Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America

*B. J. Hollars*

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## **Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America** B. J. Hollars

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*Thirteen Loops: Race, Violence, and the Last Lynching in America* recounts the story of three innocent victims, all of whom suffered violent deaths through no fault of their own: Vaudine Maddox in 1933 in Tuscaloosa, Sergeant Gene Ballard in 1979 in Birmingham, and Michael Donald in 1981 in Mobile.

The death of Vaudine Maddox--and the lynchings that followed--serves as a cautionary tale about the violence that occurred in the same region nearly fifty-years later, highlighting the cowardice, ignorance, and happenstance that sustained a culture of racial intolerance far into the future.

Nearly half a century later, after a black bank robber was acquitted for the murder of police Sergeant Gene Ballard, two Klansmen took it upon themselves to exact revenge on an innocent victim--nineteen-year-old African American Michael Donald. Donald's murder--deemed the last lynching in America--reignited the race debate in America and culminated in a courtroom drama in which the United Klans of America were at long last put on trial.

While tracing the relationships among these murders, B. J. Hollars's research led him deep into the heart of Alabama's racial, political, and legal landscapes. A work of literary journalism, *Thirteen Loops* draws upon rarely examined primary sources, court documents, newspaper reports, and first-hand accounts in an effort to unravel the twisted tale of a pair of interconnected murders that forever altered United States' race relations.

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