



Zora Hurston And The Strange Case Of Ruby McCollum

C. Arthur Ellis Jr.

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Premiering on November 18 in the 2014 season of the Discovery Channel's *A Crime to Remember*, this murder stole the headlines of every newspaper in 1952. It is the sordid tale of an African-American wife who murdered her white lover on a hot August Sunday in 1952, and the ensuing trial that shook the foundations of the Segregationist South. The murder was a crime of passion, as Ruby McCollum burst through the "colored" entrance of Dr. Adams' office and shot him 4 times during a heated argument, shortly after he was elected to the Florida State Senate. Rumors spread that the murder was over a doctor bill, yet the McCollums were wealthy operators of the illegal gambling operation known as "bolita," and were always known for paying their bills. It was only later that "outsiders" were to discover the true motive for the murder, and rip through the thin veneer of Southern civility to expose the sordid world of liquor, gambling, drugs, sex and illicit dealings between "whites" and "coloreds" that lay beneath the surface. The ensuing high profile trial in Live Oak, Florida hit the headlines of all the major newspapers of the time, and marked the first time that a woman of color was allowed to take the stand and witness against a white man who forced her to have his children. Now readers can review the full testimony allowed Ruby McCollum during her trial. Zora Hurston covered the trial for the *Pittsburgh Courier*, the newspaper with the largest circulation to African-Americans at that time. Largely lost to history, this landmark trial was given new life when Dr. C. Arthur Ellis, Jr., who knew all of the characters in the story, published the first edition of this work in print, proving to the world that McCollum actually testified during her trial while all other sources deny that she did (Full transcript in *State of Florida vs. Ruby McCollum, Defendant*, available on Amazon). Now, readers can enjoy the beauty of this color illustrated Kindle Fire edition, and download it free through the Kindle Matchbook program if they have previously purchased the print edition on Amazon. Drawing on Hurston's newspaper coverage of the trial and interviews with town residents, Ellis—a Live Oak resident himself—recounts the sensational trial. He alternates between the first-person voice of Hurston herself and a narrative of the backstory of the love affair and fortunes made in a small town on illegal gambling and drugs. --Vanessa Bush Booklist (American Library Association)

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