

# Death Row Women



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During the 20th century, only six women were legally executed by the State of New York at Sing Sing Prison. In each case, the condemned faced a process of demonization and public humiliation that was orchestrated by a powerful and unforgiving media. When compared to the media treatment of men who went to the electric chair for similar offenses, the press coverage of female killers was ferocious and unrelenting. Granite woman, black-eyed Borgia, roadhouse tramp, sex-mad, and lousy prostitute are just some of the terms used by newspapers to describe these women. Unlike their male counterparts, females endured a campaign of expulsion and disgrace before they were put to death. Not since the 1950s has New York put another woman to death. Gado chronicles the crimes, the times, and the media attention surrounding these cases. The tales of these death row women shed light on the death penalty as it applies to women and the role of the media in both the trials and executions of these convicts. In these cases, the press affected the prosecutions, the judgements, and the decisions of authorities along the way. Contemporary headlines of the era are revealing in their blatant bias and leave little doubt of their purpose. Using family letters, prison correspondence, photographs, court transcripts, and last-minute pleas for mercy, Gado paints a fuller picture of these cases and the times.

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目录:

[Death Row Women\\_下载链接1](#)

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