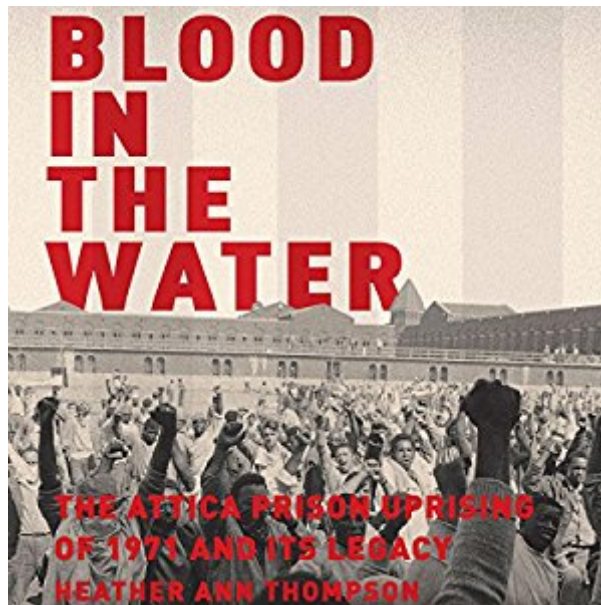


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# Blood In The Water: The Attica Prison Uprising Of 1971 And Its Legacy



## Synopsis

Winner of the 2017 Pulitzer Prize in History Winner of the 2017 Bancroft Prize National Book Award finalist Los Angeles Times book prize finalist New York Times notable book for 2016 Named a best book of the year by the Boston Globe, Newsweek, Kirkus, and Publishers Weekly The first definitive history of the infamous 1971 Attica prison uprising, the state's violent response, and the victims' decades-long quest for justice. On September 9, 1971, nearly 1,300 prisoners took over the Attica Correctional Facility in upstate New York to protest years of mistreatment. Holding guards and civilian employees hostage, the prisoners negotiated with officials for improved conditions during the four long days and nights that followed. On September 13, the state abruptly sent hundreds of heavily armed troopers and correction officers to retake the prison by force. Their gunfire killed 39 men - hostages as well as prisoners - and severely wounded more than 100 others. In the ensuing hours, weeks, and months, troopers and officers brutally retaliated against the prisoners. And, ultimately, New York State authorities prosecuted only the prisoners, never once bringing charges against the officials involved in the retaking and its aftermath, and neglecting to provide support to the survivors and the families of the men who had been killed. Drawing from more than a decade of extensive research, historian Heather Ann Thompson sheds new light on every aspect of the uprising and its legacy, giving voice to all those who took part in this 45-year fight for justice: prisoners, former hostages, families of the victims, lawyers and judges, and state officials and members of law enforcement. *Blood in the Water* is the searing and indelible account of one of the most important civil rights stories of the last century.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Just finished Heather Ann Thompson's *Blood in the Water*. It is absolutely essential to understanding the history of prisons in the US, and mass incarceration more generally. Professor Thompson spent a decade fighting for access to the long hidden records, and painstakingly reviewing the evidence to find out what really happened. Her investment in time, blood, sweat and tears has paid off for the reader! 45 years ago, prisoners took over an exercise yard at Attica prison, after months of having their complaints about insufficient food, lack of medical care, guard brutality ignored. As negotiations with the prisoners were beginning to bear fruit (the state agreed that virtually all of their complaints were legitimate), Rockefeller decided to slaughter the prisoners, to ensure he was viewed as "tough on crime" and to further his national political ambitions. The casual racism behind this decision was explicitly approved by Nixon sitting in the Oval Office (as we know because of his now famous taping system). Over the following decades, New York State did whatever it could to obscure what happened and shift blame from itself to the prisoners. Before a single body was examined, the state announced that prisoners had eviscerated guards, and castrated at least one of them, cutting off his genitals and stuffing them in his mouth. Nothing of the sort occurred. All of the guards killed in the end were slaughtered by law enforcement; none by prisoners. After reviewing all of the events of the days during the uprising and the slaughter in the days after, Thompson turns to the cover up...which reached all the way to Governor (and then Vice President) Rockefeller. She then turns to the tireless efforts of the men at Attica to gain legal redress for the harm done to them, and then to the surviving guards' battle for an apology and compensation. At the end is a wonderful Epilogue, discussing the impact not so much of the uprising itself on the course of history, but the even bigger impact of the false narrative and cover up which followed the mass slaughter by the state in the aftermath. The book was so fascinating, that I kept going all the way through the acknowledgments. A pretty comprehensive list, including illustrious scholars like Michele Alexander and Toussaint Losier; and my great friend, Shaena Fazal. Buried in the middle, was mention of Alan Mills. If this is me, I do not belong in this esteemed crowd, and had nothing to do with the book...but am so honored to be included. Wow. Anyway, read the book! *Attica; Fight Back*.

This book is a wonderful example of how to turn investigative reporting into an engaging story. Thompson analyses every angle of the story and brings the events and people to life. I truly felt I understood something deeper about American history and culture after reading it.

Every American should read this book. It took the author 10 years to research and write this definitive history of what happened during the Attica uprising in 1971. Considering that Criminal Justice Reform is in the spotlight, this book tells why we need reforms.

Highly important look at Attica and its legacy. The author's exhaustive research and dynamic retelling reminds us why the bloody 1971 retaking of the prison still matters today -- in fact, more than ever in an era of mass incarceration.

Residing in Rochester, N.Y. at the time and believing all those initial reports, it is difficult to fathom what really transpired. Well written and documented. Thank God for people such as Dr. John Edland who initially exposed what actually took place. A travesty that joins hundreds of others to form our history.

Years ago I read Tom Wicker's "A Time to Die" which covered the riot itself and the immediate aftermath. This book covers the riot in the first hundred pages, then shifts gears to the court challenges in the decades after. My praise to Ms. Thompson for this extensively researched tome, even though the state of New York has resisted providing her with evidence and documents from over forty years ago. Does the state still have something to hide? It was downright frightening to learn that the state of New York dragged its feet for thirty years and more in providing compensation and admitting wrongdoing in the aftermath of Attica. The state still, to this day, 45 years later, has not issued a formal apology. Perhaps this book will change that.

I recall Attica from my youth (1958 vintage), then hearing about it over the years. The reviews I read about this book pointed me to something that would give context & evidence to something that was horrible, then has had even worse repercussions over the decades. I don't think I've ever read a better historical account.

The title won the Pulitzer Prize in History

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