

In September 2017, the Geneseo History Department and Black Studies Program are co-sponsoring a series of events on the Attica Uprising and Why Mass Incarceration Matters. These events address local issues with national implications.

Background:

On Sept. 9, 1971, almost 1300 prisoners took over the Attica Correctional Facility and held guards and civilian employees hostage. Protesting conditions and demanding reforms, the prisoners worked with observers to secure changes. Instead, on September 13, heavily armed state troopers and correctional officers retook the prison, killing 39 men (both hostages and prisoners) and wounding more than 100 others. These events were devastating for hostages, prisoners, and their family members. They were also very significant in both the larger prison reform movement and the broad trend toward mass incarceration that has created the crisis situation we face today. Despite legal settlements between the state of New York and both prisoners (or their surviving families) and hostages (or their surviving families), and numerous fact finding commissions, too much of the full story of Attica has been distorted, suppressed, and obscured from both the public and those most closely involved or impacted. In the days, weeks, months, and years following the uprising and retaking of Attica, survivors, family members, activists, attorneys, journalists, historians, and documentary filmmakers have all struggled to document and bring this story to light and to achieve some measure of justice.

The events at Attica, which is 30 miles and one county away from Geneseo, are significant as local history with considerable national importance. These events and our understanding of them remain quite relevant, with serious contemporary implications. Geneseo is very pleased to be hosting a number of people directly involved in the Attica Uprising and subsequent events, as well as those who have made important contributions to researching and telling the story. Please join us for four programs about the Attica Uprising, its relationship to mass incarceration, and why Mass Incarceration matters.

Sept. 11, 2017, 3:30 in Newton 201: [Criminal Injustice: Death and Politics at Attica](#), Emmy-Award winning documentary produced by Christine Christopher and David Marshall about the Attica Uprising. We will screen the documentary followed by Q&A with Chris Christopher. A number of people who appear in the film will speak at subsequent campus events.

Sept. 11, 2017, 7pm in the College Union Ballroom: Attica Uprising Panel Discussion, including
Michael Smith, Corrections Officer and Hostage
Minister Raymond B.T. Scott, Observer and Rochester activist for racial and economic justice
Judge Ellen Yacknin, civil legal team attorney
Dee Quinn Miller, father was a Corrections officer who died from injuries sustained during the takeover; one of the founders of the Forgotten Victims of Attica
Joe Heath, Civil and Indigenous rights lawyer, and attorney for Attica inmates
Gary Craig, journalist who has covered Attica developments for decades
Chris Christopher, documentary filmmaker and co-producer of film on Attica (see Sep. 11, 3:30 event)

Sept. 13, 2017, 7pm in Newton 202: Organization of American Historians Distinguished Lecturer Heather Ann Thompson will present on Why Mass Incarceration Matters and the Attica Uprising. Her 2016 book, [Blood in the Water: The Attica Prison Uprising of 1971 and its Legacy](#), has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize, the Bancroft Prize in American History and Diplomacy, among many others. A professor at the University of Michigan, Thompson has written extensively on the history of policing, mass incarceration and the current criminal justice system for popular and scholarly publications, and has brought her scholarly work and activist approach to related policy issues. For more information about Heather Thompson, see her bio [here](#).

The lecture will be followed by a book signing and reception.

Sept. 20, 2017, 2:30-3:45 in Newton 203: [Joe Heath](#) will discuss "Attica 46 Years Later—the Cover Ups Continue." Heath, who is a civil and Indigenous rights lawyer, will share his experiences from his 3rd day in law school in Buffalo in September of 1971, as an organizer, law student, criminal trial lawyer and class action civil rights lawyer, up to the present.

These four events are co-sponsored by the History Department and the Black Studies program. In addition, the following have made generous contributions: The Office of the Provost, the English Department, the Xerox Center for Multicultural Teacher Education, Women and Gender Studies, the Gold Program, the Center for Community, the Office of Multicultural Programs and Services.