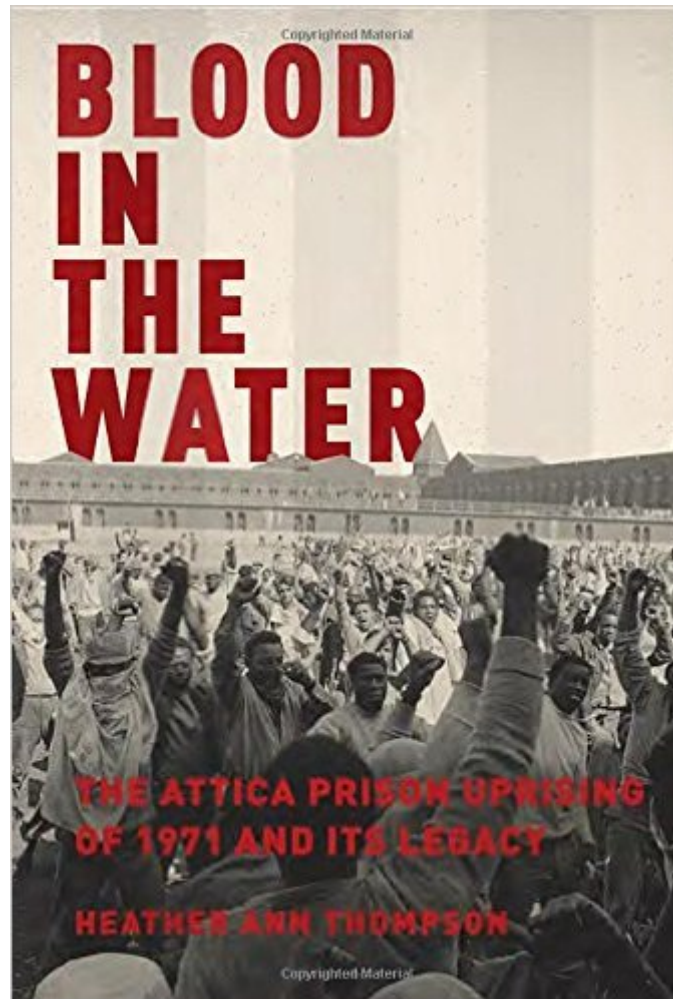


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Blood In The Water: The Attica Prison Uprising Of 1971 And Its Legacy



Synopsis

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 thirty-nine men — hostages as well as prisoners — and severely wounded more than one hundred 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 forty-five-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. (With black-and-white illustrations throughout)

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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.

2016 may just prove to be the year of upsetting literature, at least for me. Having recently read *"The Underground Railroad"*, which was a beautiful but profoundly upsetting work of fiction, and after reading a couple of other books, I turned my attention to *"Blood in the Water"*, which proves that not only can truth be stranger than fiction, but also can be more upsetting than fiction. As reported by other reviewers (including those in various newspapers), *"Blood in the Water"* is a masterful work of recent history. Ms. Thompson reports the events leading up to the Attica prison riot of 1971, the riot and its conclusion, and -- in the longest part of the book -- the aftermath, focusing on the attempts of the various parties involved to obtain justice. The first part of the book -- i.e., from before to immediately after the riot -- is one of the most riveting non-fiction accounts of any event that I can think of. It is literally a page-turner that kept me up way past my bedtime, even though (of course) I knew the outcome. The second part of the book -- the various parties' attempts to obtain justice -- was slower going (and in one case somewhat off-putting), but nonetheless compelling, particularly as Ms. Thompson brought the book to a conclusion by relating the incredibly frustrating attempts of the

hostages and prison guards who were killed or injured to obtain justice from the State of New York -- the same State of New York that arguably caused (or at a minimum contributed to) the riot in the first place. Ms. Thompson's grasp and organization of the facts is more than impressive, as is the passion with which she writes.

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