

# **The Attica Prison Riot: A Fight For Change**

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## PROCESS PAPER

We analyzed topics that seemed significant to the National History Day theme of Rights and Responsibilities. We were interested in focusing on prisoners' rights and responsibilities, but we thought that topic would be too broad. So we narrowed our focus to a specific prison event which illustrated the topic and enticed us as well. After hours of discussion we came to an agreement that the Attica Correctional Facility Riot would fit the part as a significant event in history and would depict the theme flawlessly. The Attica Correctional Facility Riot showcased the uproar of prisoners whose rights were abused and manipulated. Additionally, it describes the guards and their reaction as they failed to fulfill their responsibilities to insure a harmless and sanitary confinement to the inmates and the people of the state. Finally, this event clearly illustrates the opposing views held by citizens at the time and the impact this event continues to have on prison systems today.

We worked continuously on finding information on the topic. We were able to find information containing sources from as far back as when the facility was first built. We predominantly concentrated on finding primary sources from the riot itself. We found so many useful primary sources and only relied on secondary sources to support these ideas and to build background information about the event. Additionally, we used multiple sources that we thought were trustworthy to ensure that we obtained accurate information. We even tried to contact people who witnessed the event, however we were not successful in this effort.

We chose to create a website because of the engaging nature of the internet and our generation's internet obsession. A website was also thought to be the most efficient way of displaying our information. We had never used Weebly.com before, so we had to learn the dynamics of the site. We imported pictures, audio, video, and quotes onto the website and experimented in presenting the information a pleasing way. Originally, the hardest thing for us to do was to cut the video clips to comply with the 45 second limit. To prepare for the State competition, our challenge became how to download audio clips.

The Attica riot relates to the NHD theme because it tells a story of abused rights and miscarried responsibilities. This event changed the rights of those in many prisons across the United States and continues to impact prison systems today. The riot was a symbol of how men continue to fight for their rights, just as they've done again and again throughout history. The prisoners were very devoted to making a change within the prison where they were sentenced to serve. They did not let discrimination stop them from getting what they thought was rightfully deserved. The prisoners' determination to fight for rights, and the actions of soiled responsibilities from their supervisors, clearly demonstrates an event in history which this year's NHD category demanded.

(487 words)