

**Remarks by Acting Commissioner Anthony J. Annucci
Forgotten Victims of Attica
Attica Correctional Facility
September 13, 2014**

Good afternoon. I am both honored and humbled to be here with all of you today on this very solemn occasion, and I thank you for inviting me to be a part of your memorial gathering.

I know this is a very important day for all of you, as it should be. In fact, it is not just a tradition for you to gather here in a private ceremony on each September 13th anniversary of the 1971 retaking of Attica Correctional Facility, it is now your legal right -- a right that has been codified into statute.

And while this is a very important day for all of you, I do recognize and I do appreciate that this is also a very difficult day for you. I know this because I was there to hear your very powerful and moving words during the hearings that were convened by the Attica Task Force back in 2002. I observed and listened carefully as witness after witness got up to tell their own personal story, relate their riveting and heartfelt experiences, describe their unimaginable pain, and detail how their lives were utterly shattered by those tragic events in 1971. I watched as family members placed pictures of their loved ones on the podium for all to see as they told their personal stories. And there were those who chose instead to submit written statements to the Task Force about their experiences, because it was just too painful for them to speak in public and recount their stories. Their written statements were equally compelling.

The experience of listening to your stories and reading your statements, had a deep and profound effect upon me, which I will carry with me for the rest of my life. Certainly, as Acting Commissioner, your statements have helped to cement my resolve to do everything reasonably possible, to take every possible precaution, in order to prevent such a catastrophic event from ever again occurring.

And as you also know, the transcripts of your words, as well as your written statements, together with all other materials that you submitted, are now part of the permanent file with the State Archivist. In this way, people who have not yet even

been born, including future commissioners of this Department, can someday learn for themselves about your ordeal, as set forth in your own words.

And for all of you here today, it is clear to me that, although those events occurred many years ago, contrary to popular belief, time does not heal all wounds. There are certain wounds and certain scars that just run too deep to ever completely heal, regardless of how much time has lapsed. Under such circumstances, perhaps the best we can ever do is to try and at least provide a measure of healing.

And in that vein, it was not necessary for me to direct my staff to be as respectful, as solicitous, as courteous, as sensitive and as accommodating as possible, in the process of reconnecting the recently released artifacts and personal items that were confiscated in the aftermath of the riot, to the appropriate survivors and family members. My staff acted that way on their own. They fully grasped how difficult and how emotional this would be for you, and they wanted to do everything humanely possible to be mindful of your needs, to be sensitive to your wishes, and to provide a dignified and uncomplicated process for the examination, identification and transfer of the items to the appropriate survivors and family members.

I know my staff were also deeply affected and moved, when they first undertook the responsibility for sorting through all of the personal items that had been stored, knowing all too well the original circumstances under which they were last worn or carried, and the very real people to whom they belonged. Accordingly, they handled every item with great care, respect and reverence. It is the sincere hope of everyone at the Department that this process provide at least some measure of healing, some measure of comfort, and some measure of closure to all of the concerned families.

Now if I may, I would like to leave you with one last thought. When you first decided to come together and form an organization to petition your government, you appropriately decided to call yourselves “The Forgotten Victims of Attica.” Unquestionably, you have achieved many things throughout the years since your very first meeting. But perhaps above else, your greatest accomplishment is this.

You will never again be forgotten – Never. That is my promise to you.

Thank you.

9/12/14