

# TV: 'Like It Is' Plans Special Tomorrow on Attica

By JOHN J. O'CONNOR  
 "Like It Is," moderated by  
 Gil Noble and Geraldo Ri-  
 vera, is a weekly series on

WABC-TV aimed primarily at  
 the black and Puerto Rican  
 communities in New York.  
 Using a blend of interviews,

entertainment and news re-  
 ports, it attempts to provide  
 material that is in scarce  
 supply on the rest of com-  
 mercial television.

Tomorrow at 2 P.M., "Like  
 It Is" is presenting a special  
 hour-and-a-half edition titled  
 "Attica: The Unanswered  
 Questions." Produced by  
 Charles Hobson and written  
 by an associate producer,  
 Richard T. Watkins, it is  
 special—for several reasons.

In full agreement with  
 Assemblyman Arthur O.  
 Eve's conclusion that "we  
 are living in a system that  
 does not value human life,"  
 the program extensively re-  
 views the events of Attica,  
 the fates of the "men of  
 Tent City" (who are never  
 referred to as convicts or  
 prisoners), with an attitude  
 that might best be described  
 as simmering outrage.

That outrage is directed at  
 all elements of the Amer-  
 ican "power structure," in-  
 cluding Governor Rockefeller  
 and President Nixon. And it  
 explodes in a final segment  
 in which a black minister de-  
 livering a funeral eulogy con-  
 demns, with the roaring ap-  
 proval of his congregation, all  
 of those elements to "burn  
 in hell."

In one section labeled  
 "commentary," Mr. Rivera  
 recalls having read a news-  
 paper story titled "I Saw  
 Seven Throats Slashed," and  
 including graphic eyewitness  
 descriptions. One notable  
 "eyewitness" who provided  
 other stories to various offi-  
 cials, the program recalls,  
 was Commissioner Russell G.  
 Oswald's deputy, Walter Dun-  
 bar.

Many of the reports were,  
 it turned out, not true. Mr.  
 Rivera argues, though, that  
 they had given a color of jus-  
 tice to the assault on 'Times  
 Square' made murder seem  
 justifiable homicide, and al-  
 lowed the men who ordered  
 that massacre to say: 'My  
 men killed those animals, be-

cause the animals had brutal-  
 ly and barbarically murdered  
 the hostages, who were their  
 friends.'

He adds: "It's taught me  
 one thing. I'll never write a  
 story based on an official  
 account again. Attica is the  
 low-water mark the dark age  
 of journalism."

Covering developments  
 since the Attica uprising,  
 "Like It Is" has recorded  
 interviews with a variety of  
 officials and with the fam-  
 ilies of prisoners. Since deep-  
 seated bitterness still pre-  
 dominated on all sides, the  
 program poses still another  
 potentially explosive ques-  
 tion: "How many men ac-  
 tually did die at Attica?" It  
 suggests — on the basis of  
 several defined points — to  
 the National Lawyers Guild  
 that a court order be ob-  
 tained to demand a super-  
 vised head count—including  
 the men prison officials say  
 have been transferred to  
 other institutions.

A balanced report? No. In  
 another "commentary," Gil  
 Noble explains that "to those  
 viewers who don't like the  
 positions we have stated, and  
 feel that there should be more  
 'balance' from a white view-  
 point, we say this:

"'Like It Is' is the only  
 program this station airs that  
 is an expression of the black  
 and Puerto Rican opinion.  
 Everything else on Channel 7  
 comes from a white psyche.  
 This single program can hard-  
 ly be called equal time, be-  
 cause at least 30 per cent of  
 our viewers are black and  
 Puerto Rican. It then follows  
 that it would be indeed fool-  
 ish to divide this already  
 inadequate time between our  
 opinions and those of whites.  
 We view 'Like It Is' as being  
 in itself a rebuttal."

For commercial television,  
 the strong opinions are un-  
 usual. For anyone interested  
 in the tragedy of Attica and  
 its possible lessons, they can-  
 not be ignored.