By LIBBY CUDMORE

On the eve of his 2008 SUNY Oneonta graduation, Sean Gallagher got a call he hadn’t been expecting. “If you ever want to tell the real story of the Blacklist,” Kathleen O’Mara told him. “Here it is.”

Gallagher, a communications major, had completed a 20-minute documentary, “The Brothers of the Blacklist,” for his first Documentary Studies class.

She gave him a box of news footage, interviews, archival film and newspaper clippings detailing the events and aftermath of that morning of Sept. 4, 1992, when a 77-year-old Oneonta woman was

‘Blacklist’ Film Packs SUNY Hall

'08 Grad’s Work Premieres Locally
Turnout Huge At SUNY For ‘Blacklist’ Film

LIST/From Al

attacked by a black man. Lief Hartmark, then SUNY Oneonta vice president/finance & administration, handed over the names of 78 black students to the police, beginning perhaps the most controversial chapter in the college’s history.

Gallagher spent the next three years combing through the footage and locating students, faculty and others involved with the case to expand his 20-minute class project into a 72-minute film now entered into 30 festivals. “People trusted me with their stories,” said Gallagher. “Some of them told me it was a therapy session.”

He produced the film, “The Brothers of the Blacklist,” with Jonathan Demme, the director of Oscar-winning “Silence of the Lambs” and “Philadelphia.”

Monday, Feb. 3, 400 people crammed into SUNY Oneonta’s IRC 1, sitting on stairs, against walls or standing to see the film’s premier. “It’s beyond an honor to have this first publically screened at SUNY,” said Gallagher.

In the audience were Tyrone Lohr, who was on the Blacklist; Sheryl Chapman, admissions officer at the time, and Scott Fein, the lawyer who took the 14-year discrimination case pro-bono. “I don’t know why I took this case,” he said. “But I thank God that I did.”

In the film, another Blacklisted student, Kirk Allen, said, “The only list I wanted to be on was the Dean’s List.” Instead, he was approach by police who asked him to show his hands. If he didn’t, he was threatened with detainment.

According to Gallagher, Hartmark and Alan Donovan, SUNY Oneonta president at the time, did not return requests to be interviewed for the film. H. Karl Chandler, former state police investigator in charge of the case, hung up on him, the filmmaker said. “It’s a shame,” said Gallagher. “I would have loved to hear their side of the story.”

Many of the Blacklisted students went on to graduate and spoke happily to Gallagher of their time at SUNY Oneonta. “If my son wanted to go here, I would be so proud,” said Allen. “It derailed my thinking, but it didn’t derail me.”

But some, like Allington Dottin, who was president of the SUNY Oneonta Third World Association (TWA) and was featured in archival footage of a rally, didn’t fare as well. Dottin dropped out of SUNY Oneonta and was found guilty of murdering a Florida bouncer in 2003.

For many, the memories weren’t easy to relive. Edward “Bo” Whaley, the former educational opportunities counselor, left several filmed interviews in tears. “Talking about this ruins my day,” he said in one of the interviews.

“The Brothers of the Blacklist,” was selected for the 2014 Africa World Documentary Film Festival, and Gallagher hopes to continue to take the film to colleges.