

East Side Freedom Library Topic List for History Day 2018: Conflict and Compromise in History

All topics have books available at the ESFL. This list of topics is not exhaustive. We chose topics from our collection that we thought would interest students. We have resources available on a wide range of labor, civil rights, immigration, Native American, Latino, women's, and social justice topics.

Our volunteers have contacts with professors and primary source contacts (for more recent topics) and we are committed to helping students set up interviews.

ESFL has experienced mentors who can help with thesis development, finding other sources, and structuring an argument.

Scheduled History Day Help Sessions: Saturday mornings, November 4, 2017 – April 21, 2018, 10–12.

The library is also available after school and evenings. Students can contact the library at info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org.

Labor

A. Philip Randolph: Double V Campaign 1940s

During WWII, A. Philip Randolph, a black labor leader, led a movement to bring a “double victory” over fascism abroad and racism at home.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H

AFL-CIO Merger 1955

The country's two union federations, one made up of skilled workers (AFL) and one of unskilled production workers (CIO), united to create a single organization.

OP, UM

Air Traffic Controllers Strike 1981

Members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers' Union challenged President Ronald Reagan by launching an illegal strike to fight for better working conditions.

OP, UM

Boston Police Strike 1919

In the midst of the labor turmoil after WWI, Boston police refused to crack down on strikers and went on strike themselves.

OP, UM, CA

Chicago Packinghouse Worker's Strike 1919*

In the aftermath of WWI, black, immigrant, and white workers united in Chicago to support each other and stand up for their rights. Their movement became intertwined with the Chicago race riot of 1919.

Flint Sit-Down Strike 1936

In a dramatic action which gripped the nation, auto workers struck in January 1936 and occupied their plant rather than setting up picket lines outside.

OP, UM

Harry Bridges 1937

Australian-born leader of California longshoremen's union confronted accusations of being a “communist” in the tumultuous 1930s.

OP, UM

Haymarket Affair 1886

Immigrant workers launched a dramatic fight for the 8 Hour Day in the spring of 1886s in Chicago, where picketers and police engaged in a violent conflict.

OP, UM, CA

Henry Ford's Goon Squads 1920-1940*

Henry Ford hired Harry Bennett to provide security at his automobile plants with armed thugs when his workers tried to unionize. They were active during the 1932 hunger strike and the sit down strikes of the later 1930s.

UM

Homestead Strike 1892

In 1892, Andrew Carnegie sent private security guards to shoot immigrant workers who were striking at Andrew Carnegie's steel mill in Pennsylvania.

OP, UM, CA

League of Revolutionary Black Workers 1969

Black auto workers created their own organization, separate from the United Auto Workers' Union, to stand up for their own rights.

OP, UM

Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike 1968

Black garbage collectors struck for the right to have a union. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was murdered when he came to speak to the workers.

OP, J-S, J-H

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Minneapolis Teachers Strike 1970

Minneapolis teachers went on strike for higher salaries and better working conditions, causing controversy among teachers and the community.

OP, UM

National Committee on Child Labor 1905-

The National Committee on Child Labor has been working since 1905 to provide children with a real childhood in the United States and around the world.

OP, UM, CA

New Mexico Zinc Miner's Strike 1950*

Mexican immigrant miners went on strike for their rights, and won when their wives took over their picket lines. A documentary, *Salt of the Earth*, featuring organizer Clinton Jencks was criticized as leftist during the McCarthy era.

UM, J-H (DVD)

Pinkerton Spies and Strikebreakers 1850-1920

Many employers chose to hire private security companies to spy on their workers rather than bargain with their unions. They also hired them as strikebreakers.

OP, UM, CA

Postal Strike 1970

200,000 postal workers in over 100 cities launched an illegal "wildcat" strike in order to win the right to have a union and bargain about the terms of their employment.

OP, UM

Pullman Strike 1894

Workers at Pullman Company went on strike, and received the support of railroad workers all across the country, shutting down most rail traffic west of Chicago.

OP, CA, UM, J-H, J-S

Reuther Brothers 1932

Three Reuther brothers, Walter, Victor, and Roy, became the organizers and leaders of the United Auto Workers Union., one of the country's most progressive unions.

OP, UM

Seattle General Strike 1919

Workers from a wide range of unions shut down the city after failing to get higher pay after a 2 year wage freeze. They were accused of being communists.

OP, UM, CA

Tampa Cigar Makers' Strike 1931

This was the final battle for free speech and education on the work floor performed by "readers." Because of them, many illiterate cigar makers became well versed in politics, labor, literature, and international relations.

OP, UM

Teamsters Union Reform* 1976-

Union members launched the Teamsters for a Democratic Union to reform the Teamsters Union, which had become infiltrated by the mob and was dictatorial.

UM, OP

Unions and the Red Scare* 1950s

Just as unions were reaching the peak of their influence in the United States, during the McCarthy era, a national frenzy about "communists" was used to undermine them.

United Farm Workers 1966

Led by Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta, Mexican migrant farm workers used creative and dramatic tactics to win public sympathy for their struggle for their rights.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

West Coast Waterfront Strike 1934

Longshoremen and warehouse workers led a general strike in San Francisco, seeking the rights to organize unions. The strike spread to other west coast cities.

OP, UM

Minnesota Labor

Hormel Strike 1985

Packinghouse workers in Austin launched a strike against wage cuts in the midst of Ronald Reagan's America, becoming an inspiration to workers around the country.

UM

Mesabi Strike 1916

On the eve of WWI, immigrant miners fought for better working conditions, better pay, and respect. Their wives and daughters also played big roles.

OM, UM, CA

Minneapolis Teamsters Strike 1934

Truck drivers and warehouse workers launched a series of strikes which transformed Minneapolis and inspired workers around the country,

OP, UM

Women in Labor

Bread and Roses Strike 1912

Immigrant women in Massachusetts, were organized by the Industrial Workers of the World, to demand better wages ("bread") and dignified treatment ("roses").

OP, UM, CA, J-H

Frances Perkins 1920s and 1930s

After witnessing the tragedy of the Triangle Factory Fire in 1912, Frances Perkins began a long career in labor, including overseeing major labor reforms in the New Deal.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H

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Mother Jones 1837-1930

Called the “Miners’ Angel,” Mary Harris Jones led marches, rallies, and strikes from the late 1800s until her death, including a famous Children’s March.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Rosie the Riveter

During WWII millions of women took jobs in industries, replacing men who had become soldiers. The “Rosie the Riveter” poster became their symbol.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H

Women’s Trade Union League 1903

In the early 20th century, white middle class women supported immigrant women organizing to change their wages and working conditions.
UM, CA, J-S

Women’s Tobacco Strike of 1946*

White and black women who worked in large cigarette factories in North Carolina organized unions, went on strike, and sang “We Sang Overcome” on the picket lines.
OP, UM

Willmar 8 1977

Eight women at a small town bank organized a union, fought for respect and rights, and gained national attention. This was the first strike against a bank.
OP, UM

Labor Laws

National Labor Relations Act 1935*

Senator Robert Wagner introduced a law which established ground rules for workers to organize unions and gain their rights.
OP, UM

Fair Labor Standards Act 1938*

After thirty years of workers’ organizing and protesting, this law established the 8 hour day. It also established national minimum wage and child labor laws.
OP, UM

Civil Rights

Bayard Rustin 1912-1987

Rustin was an important Civil Rights leader who is not widely known because of his homosexuality. He helped organize the SLC and the 1963 March on Washington.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Black Panther Party 1966-1982

This organization ran breakfast programs and medical clinics and advocated for black power. FBI called it the greatest threat to security of the country.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Black Power at 1968 Olympic Games

The 1968 Olympics Black Power salute was a civil rights demonstration conducted by African-American athletes Tommie Smith and John Carlos during their medal ceremony.
OP, UM

Booker T. Washington v W.E.B. Dubois 1890

Two great leaders of the black community in the late 19th and early 20th century disagreed on strategies for black social and economic progress. Their viewpoints are found in today’s arguments on how to end racial injustice.
OP, UM, CA, J-S, J-H, J-R

Busing Protests 1970s

In 1971 the Supreme Court upheld court-ordered busing of students to desegregate schools. This led to protests throughout the country, including Boston in 1975.
OP, MN

Children’s Crusade Birmingham 1963

High school and elementary students marched for civil rights. They were blasted with fire hoses and had police dogs set on them.
OP, MN, J-H

Convict Labor and 13th Amendment

The 13th Amendment, outlawed slavery, but men and women convicted of crimes could be forced to work for no pay. This became the source of a convict labor industry.
OP, UM

Desegregation of Armed Forces 1948

After a long struggle by civil rights leader A. Philip Randolph and others, President Harry Truman desegregated the Armed Forces. Integrated combat units were sent to fight in the Korean War two years later.
OP, UM, J-H

Great Migration and Housing 1910-1960*

As millions of blacks moved from the South to the North and West, they were forced into housing in segregated areas of cities which remain segregated today.
OM, UM, J-H

Green Book Travel Directory 1936-1964

Because most public hotels were segregated before 1964, the Green Book was published with information on where blacks could stay throughout the country.
OP, UM

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Freedom Riders 1961

In 1961 civil rights activists rode buses in the South to test the Supreme Court ruling that interstate buses could not be segregated. Riders were beaten and hospitalized. OP, UM, J-S, J-H

Freedom Summer 1964

SNCC led a major drive to increase voter registration among black people in Mississippi. 4 civil rights workers killed, 80 beaten, 37 churches and 30 homes and business bombed or burned.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H

Ida B. Wells Anti-Lynching Campaign 1889-

Wells was an investigative journalist who began a national anti-lynching campaign after 3 of her friends were lynched.

OP, UM, CA, J-S, J-H, J-R

Jim Crow Laws 1890-1965

These laws required segregation of public schools, public places and transportation, and the segregation of restrooms, restaurants, and drinking fountains.

OP, UM, CA, J-S

Little Rock School Integration 1957

Central High School was the first school integrated after *Brown v Board of Education*. President Eisenhower sent the US Army to protect the Little Rock Nine.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

March on Washington 1963

Civil Rights groups organized a march for economic and civil rights for blacks. 250,000 people joined the march, where ML King gave his "I Have a Dream" speech.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X 1960-

Peaceful, nonviolent resistance vs. meeting force with force: Dr. King and Malcolm X offered very different strategies in the struggle for civil rights.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Mississippi Democratic Freedom Party 1964

Blacks were denied the right to participate in the Democratic Party in Mississippi, so they founded the MDFP. They took a delegation to the National Democratic convention but were denied seating.

OP, UM, J-H

Muhammad Ali 1964-

Heavyweight champion of the world was radicalized by the Nation of Islam ("Black Muslims") and Vietnam war, to stand up for racial and social justice.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Redlining 1934

Banks and realtors in northern cities created rules and practices to exclude blacks from white neighborhoods. OP, UM

Restrictive Housing Covenants

This was a tactic to maintain all-white neighborhoods by requiring property owners to sell only to other whites. OP, UM

Scottsboro Boys 1931

Nine black teenagers were falsely accused of raping two white women on a train in Alabama. After local trials largely regarded as unfair, the case was appealed to the Supreme Court which resulted in the landmark case of *Powell v Alabama*.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Selma to Montgomery Alabama Marches 1965

These non-violent marches involved attacks by state troopers on the marchers, murder, conflicts between SNCC and SLC, and finally, protection for the marchers.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

SNCC Transition: Stokely Carmichael 1966

Stokely Carmichael took over as president of SNCC, called for "Black Power" and told white activists to stay in their northern communities and make changes there.

OP, MN, J-H

Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment 1932-1972

The U.S. Public Health Service studied the effects of syphilis on black men at Tuskegee University. Men were not treated even after a cure was found in 1947.

OP, UM, J-H

University of California vs Bakke 1978

Landmark Civil Rights case that upheld affirmative action, but ruled that quotas based on race were not permissible.

OM, UM

Immigration

Chinese Exclusion Act 1882

This law excluded all Chinese laborers and was in effect into the 1920s. It was the first law to exclude one specific ethnic group.

OM, UM, CA, J-H

Gentlemen's Agreement 1907

The U.S. and Japan agreed informally that America would not impose restriction on Japanese immigration and Japan would not allow further emigration to the U.S.

OP, UM, CA

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Jane Addams Hull House 1889-1935

Hull House provided social and educational opportunities for immigrants on the West Side of Chicago. These included a public kitchen, preschool for children with working mothers, English and citizenship classes.

OP, UM, CA, J-S, J-H, J-R

Native American History

Alcatraz Takeover 1969-1971

Indians from around the country took over the former prison to test the law that federal lands no longer in use should be returned to the native tribes. It was an important event in the 1960-70s Indian rights movement.

OP, UM, J-S

American Indian Movement 1968-

AIM was founded in Minneapolis to combat the racism, police harassment, and poverty confronting urban Indians along with Indian sovereignty and treaty rights.

OP, UM, J-S

Dakota War 1862

After years of treaty violations by the US and refusal to pay treaty annuities, Dakota Indians in Minnesota were starving. Some young men attacked settlements and the U.S. and the Dakota went to war.

OP, UM, CA, J-H

Dawes Act 1887

This divided tribal lands into allotments for individual tribal members. Those who participated received US citizenship. It was meant to assimilate Indians into American society and make tribal lands available to white settlers.

OP, UM, CA

Indian Removal Act 1830

The Act authorized President Andrew Jackson to grant unsettled lands west of the Mississippi in exchange for Indian lands in the US. This led to Trail of Tears.

OP, UM, CA, J-S, J-H

Indian Reorganization Act 1934

The purpose of this was to reverse the goal of assimilation in favor of encouraging traditional culture and to return management of tribal lands and their assets to the tribes.

OP, UM

Wounded Knee South Dakota 1890

In the 1880s, the U.S. army waged war against the Lakota. In 1890, they massacred at least 150 Lakota men, women and children at Wounded Knee.

OP, UM, CA, J-S

Wounded Knee South Dakota 1973

Members of the Lakota and AIM took over the town of Wounded Knee on the Pine Ridge reservation to protest the failure to remove the tribal chairman they considered corrupt. They battled for 2 months with Federal officials.

OP, UM

Women's History

Alice Paul 1907-1920

Paul led the final charge for women's suffrage that led to the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote. She went to jail for her tactics and went on a hunger strike and was force fed.

OP, UM, CA, J-S, J-H, J-R

Pankhursts & British Suffrage 1889-1918

Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters led the British women's suffrage movement with tactics such as chaining themselves to buildings, going to jail and hunger strikes.

OP, UM, CA

League of Women Voters 1920-

The League was formed by Carrie Chapman Catt to help women take on a larger role in political life. Early years were spent working hard to get women to vote.

OP, UM, CA, J-S

American Woman Suffrage Association vs National Woman Suffrage Association 1869

The women's rights movement split over the 15th Amendment which gave black men the right to vote but not women.

OP, UM, CA, J-H

Margaret Sanger 1911-

Sanger was a birth control activist who was arrested for her book on family planning, began the first birth control clinic and founded Planned Parenthood.

OP, UM, CA, J-H

National Organization of Women 1966

The failure to enforce the anti-sex discrimination provisions of the Civil Rights Act led to the founding of NOW which focused on job discrimination and the ERA.

OP, UM

Women's Christian Temperance Union 1874

The WCTU was founded to make alcohol illegal. They also supported women's suffrage, Americanization of immigrants, and protecting girls from exploitation.

OP, UM, CA

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Latino History

Bilingual Education Act 1968

This law was the first federal recognition of the needs of limited English speaking students. It provided funding for bilingual programming.

OP, UM

Brown Berets 1967

The Brown Berets grew out of Chicano student activism in Los Angeles. The group worked to improve public schools, health care, job opportunities and end police harassment. There was an active St. Paul group.

OP, UM

La Raza Unida 1970

Members of Mexican American Youth Organization founded La Raza Unida to improve prospects of Mexican Americas. They elected local officials in many Texas counties.

UM

Los Angeles Student Walkouts 1968

Thousands of Chicano students in East LA schools held mass walkouts and demonstrations demanding better schools, bilingual education, and Latino culture classes.

OP, UM

Mexican-American Political Association 1960

MAPA was founded to help elect Mexican-Americans to political office. They held voter registration drives, offered education programs, and took position on political issues.

UM

Mexican-American Youth Organization 1967

MAYO was founded in San Antonio and focused on education. MAYO supported at least 17 student walkouts and other direct actions and on voter registration.

UM

The Young Lords 1960

The Young Lords began in Chicago as a Puerto Rican gang, but grew into an activist organization advocating for Puerto Rican independence and local empowerment and ran neighborhood programs such as free breakfasts.

OP, UM

Social Justice

Dorothy Day 1932

Day was founder of the Catholic Workers movement and its newspaper, The Catholic Worker, which promoted activism to improve conditions for workers and the poor.

OP, UM, J-H

Archbishop Oscar Romero 1977

During the El Salvador civil war Romero denounced the killings, torture and disappearances at the hands of government troops. He was assassinated in 1980.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

The Minnesota Powerline Controversy 1976

Two electrical coops proposed a high voltage powerline through Minnesota. Farmers protested the lines by sabotaging surveying and construction equipment.

OP, UM

Hmong History

General Vang Pao 1961

During the Vietnam War, the US CIA recruited Vang Pao and other Hmong to fight the Pathet Lao, People's Army of Vietnam and National Liberation Front in support of US efforts in Vietnam.

OP, UM

Hmong and Western Medicine

In Laos, Hmong were cured of medical ills by traditional shaman rituals, which brought them into conflict with Western medicine in the US. The Merced, CA, hospital was a leader in helping bring the groups together.

OP, UM

Changing Hmong Gender Roles in America

In Southeast Asia, Hmong culture was strongly patriarchal, but in the U.S., Hmong women and men have been exposed to a range of other possibilities for their roles in education, job opportunities, and family life.

OP, UM

Cultural Preservation v Assimilation

Like other immigrants, the Hmong in America have faced issues of adjusting to the new society and culture. They have had to decide how much of American culture to accept and how much of Hmong culture to keep.

OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

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