East Side Freedom Library Topic List for History Day 2019:
Triumph and Tragedy in History

All topics have books available at the ESFL. This list is not exhaustive. We have resources on a wide range of labor, civil rights, immigration, Native American, Latino, women’s, and social justice topics. The topics are chosen so that students can determine a tragedy and triumph with some basic research.

ESFL has experienced mentors who can help with thesis development, finding other sources, and structuring an argument. Our volunteers have contacts with professors and primary source contacts (for more recent topics) and we are committed to helping students set up interviews.

Scheduled History Day Help Sessions: Saturday mornings, November 3, 2018 – April 27, 2019, 10–12. The library is also available after school and evenings. Students can contact the library at info@eastsidefreoemlibrary.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

Air Traffic Controllers Strike 1981
Members of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers’ Union by launched an illegal strike to fight for better working conditions.
OP, UM

Bay View Massacre 1886*
Polish iron workers in Milwaukee struck for an eight hour day. The state militia opened fire on them and killed eight.
OP, CA

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 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.
UM, J-S, J-H

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
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 1886 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,

Homestead Strike 1892
In 1892, Andrew Carnegie sent private security guards to shoot immigrant workers who were striking at 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.
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

Minneapolis Teachers Strike 1970
Minneapolis teachers went on strike for higher salaries and better working conditions, causing controversy among teachers and the community.

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources.
Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
National Committee on Child Labor 1905-1914
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 Miners Strike 1950
Mexican immigrant miners went on strike for their rights, and won when their wives took over their picket lines.
UM, J-H (DVD)

Pinkerton Spies and Strikebreakers 1850-1920
Employers hired private security companies like the Pinkertons to spy on their workers and 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 organizers and leaders of the United Auto Workers Union.
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

Teamsters Union Reform* 1976-1980
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.

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources.
Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
West Coast Waterfront Strike 1934
Longshoremen and warehouse workers led a general strike in San Francisco, seeking the right 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.
UM

Mesabi Strike 1916
On the eve of WWI, immigrant miners fought for better working conditions, better pay, and respect. Their wives and children also played big roles.
OM, UM, CA

Minneapolis Teamsters Strike 1934
Truck drivers and warehouse workers launched a series of strikes in Minneapolis.
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

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, CA, J-S, J-H, J-R

Triangle Fire, 1911
Young Jewish immigrant women were leaders in the fight for better working conditions for women in the garment industry both before and after the Triangle Fire.
OP, UM, CA, J-S, J-H, J-R

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

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources.
Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
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

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

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, UM

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, UM, 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.
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.
OP, UM, J-H

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources. Abbreviations mean: OP—online primary sources easily available, CA—Chronicling America articles available. UM—primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
Green Book Travel Directory 1936-1964
Because most hotels were segregated before 1964, the Green Book was published with information on where blacks could stay throughout the country.
OP, UM

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 a 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.
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

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—
The 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

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources.
Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
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 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’s Early Years
The Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee grew out of the student boycotts in the early 1960s. The group organized boycotts, other direct action and voter registration efforts to help African-Americans gain rights.
OP, UM,

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, UM, 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

Immigration
Chinese Exclusion Act 1882
This law excluded all Chinese laborers and was in effect into the 1920s. It was the first law limiting immigration.
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

Immigration Act of 1924
This act limited the number of immigrants allowed entry into the United States through a national origins quota which seriously limited visas to the United States for people from Eastern and Southern Europe, Asia, and Africa.
OM, UM, CA, J-H

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.
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 act 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 the 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

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources. Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
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. OP, UM, CA, 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

**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

**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**

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources. Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)*
Members of Mexican American Youth Organization founded La Raza Unida to improve prospects of Mexican Americas. They elected local officials in Texas counties.

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 and offered education programs.
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 voter registration.
UM

The Young Lords 1960
The Young Lords, begun as a Puerto Rican gang, became an activist organization advocating for Puerto Rican independence and running neighborhood programs such as free breakfasts.
OP, UM

Social Justice/Human Rights
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 and canonized as a Saint in 2018.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Tiananmen Square
A protest by Chinese students in Tiananmen Square in Beijing, China, for more freedom and responsive government led to a crackdown by government forces with around 10,000 deaths.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R

Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, 1917-1919
Throughout its tenure the MCPS provided useful services. It distributed food, controlled the prices of goods, and conserved fuel. However, it is best known for its use of

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources. Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
secret surveillance, intimidation, and other extreme tactics in the name of protecting Minnesota’s citizens.

OP, UM, CA

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

1975 Indochina Refugee and Assistance Act
This act financed the resettlement costs of more than 130,000 Vietnamese who had been evacuated from Vietnam and was extended in 1976 to cover the Hmong.

OP, UM, J-S

Refugee Camps in Thailand
Hmong, Lao and Cambodian refugees fled their homes at the end of the Southeast Asian War, often in very dangerous situations. They lived there until they were able to go to another country.

OP, UM

South Africa
South African Congress of Trade Unions 1955-1985
These trade unions were fundamental to the anti-apartheid struggle.

OP, UM

Congress Alliance Freedom Charter 1955
Led by the African National Congress (ANC), this multi-racial alliance authored the Freedom Charter—an important document to the anti-apartheid struggle which defined the African peoples’ “freedom demands.”

OP, UM

Nelson Mandela 1918-2013
Mandela was an anti-apartheid revolutionary who served over twenty years in prison before negotiating peace with the Apartheid rulers, and then served as South Africa’s first black President from 1994-1999.

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

Steve Biko 1946-1977
An African Nationalist and Socialist, Biko was a prolific writer and organiser who founded The Black Consciousness Movement, and whose death at the hands of the government provoked a global response.

OP, UM

Soweto Uprising 1976
An estimated 20,000 grade school students took part in protests against the Apartheid education system, which were

We checked other places for additional sources. *Topic may be difficult because of complexity or few sources. Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicking America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)
met with police brutality, including death.

Truth and Reconciliation Commission 1995-2000
The TRC investigated human rights violations from 1960-1994, and was charged with restoring dignity and giving reparations to those harmed, as well as granting amnesty to perpetrators of the crimes.

OP, UM

The Boer Wars 1880—1881, 1889–1902
These wars between the British and the white South Africans of Dutch descent (Afrikaaners) were fought to win the right to control the resources and Africans and other people of color in South Africa. It ended in British victory.

OP, UM

South African Students’ Organization (SASO) 1968
Black university students formed their own organization for political work—mostly projects at schools—but were seriously repressed by their inclusion in the Affected Organization Act of 1974, which banned the organization and its leaders.

OP, UM

Abbreviations mean: OP-online primary sources easily available, CA-Chronicling America articles available. UM-primary sources available at the University of Minnesota. Books available for students reading at or below grade level at public libraries: J-H (Hennepin County); J-S (St. Paul), J-R (Ramsey)