East Side Freedom Library Topic List for History Day 2020: BREAKING BARRIERS

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 and apply to the theme of “Breaking Barriers.” We have resources on labor, civil rights, immigration, Native American, Latinx, 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: Most Saturday mornings, November – April, 10 a.m.– noon

The library is also available after school and evenings. Students can contact the library at 651-207-4926 and info@eastsidefreelibrary.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.

OP, UM

**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

**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

**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. Management broke skilled workers unions.

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

**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)

**Postal Strike 1970**

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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

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

Upton Sinclair’s The Jungle 1906
The Jungle focused American attention on the sanitary and labor conditions in the meat processing factories, and led to reforms in the industry.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H

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, 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

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

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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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**Ella Baker 1963**

After successful careers with the NAACP and the Southern Leadership Council (SLC), Ella Baker helped found the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC).

**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, many of which remain segregated today.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**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.

**John Doar in the Civil Rights Movement 1960-67**

John Doar was the Assistant Attorney General sent by the Federal government to assist activists in the Civil Rights Movement. He played an active role with the Freedom Riders and in many other activities.
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. These were reflected in Federal Housing Administration rules.
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

University of California vs Bakke 1978
Landmark Civil Rights case that upheld affirmative action, but ruled that quotas based on race were not permissible.
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.
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.
UM, CA

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.
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.
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.
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.
UM, CA, J-H

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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 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

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

Ruth Tanbara 1942-1945*
Ruth Tankara was allowed to go to St. Paul during the WWI Japanese detention in camps if she could find a sponsor. She did and then sponsored other Japanese-American detainees.
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

Latinx 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 Americans. 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 positions 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

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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 groups opposing US efforts in South Vietnam.
OP, UM

Hmong Elected in Minnesota 1991
Choua Lee was the first Hmong to be elected in the United States. She was elected to the St. Paul School Board. Many more Hmong have been elected to other offices in Minnesota since then.
OP, UM

Hmong Veterans Naturalization Act 2000
The Act gave Hmong veterans an exemption from the English requirements for naturalization and special consideration for civics testing.
OP, UM