

East Side Freedom Library Topic List for History Day 2021: Communication 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 and apply to the theme of "Communication in History." Many of the topics are protests, strikes, rallies, marches, demonstrations, etc. In order to address the theme, students will need to determine what the protestors or strikers wanted to communicate; who their audience was; how they went about communicating their needs or demands; and what the impact of their action was. For topics about laws, students will need to address who was organizing and communicating in order to get them passed.

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

Students should contact the library at 651-207-4926 or info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org to find out if and when the library will be open during the pandemic, or if History Day assistance will only be online. We anticipate a fluid situation.

Labor

AFL-CIO Merger 1955

The country's two union federations, one made up of skilled workers (AFL) and one of unskilled production workers (CIO), negotiated and created a single organization.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Cartoons on Labor Issues

Mike Konopacki has been communicating labor's issues to union members and the public for over 40 years through his syndicated work and books.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Labor Music

Songs became a major means of creating solidarity among workers uniting to improve their lot. Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Paul Robeson were notable labor singers.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

Memphis Sanitation Workers Strike 1968

Black garbage collectors struck for the right to have a union. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated when he came to speak to the workers.
OP, J-S, J-H, MX

National Committee on Child Labor 1905-

The National Committee on Child Labor hired Lewis Hines to document and publicize the plight of working children.
OP, UM, CA, MX

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), MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Soap Box Organizing* 1905-1920

Members of the radical IWW inspired, educated and agitated for workers' rights by developing leaders who would stand on milk crates in public spaces and give powerful speeches.
OP, UM

Inspiring Workers

Eugene Debs, William Haywood, Elizabeth Gurley Brown, and John L. Lewis were among the many labor leaders who inspired workers through their speeches. They led workers through many campaigns and strikes for their rights.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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. CBS newsman Edward R. Murrow was key in bringing him down.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Minnesota Labor

Hormel Strike 1985

Packinghouse workers in Austin launched a strike against wage cuts, becoming an inspiration to workers around the country.
UM, MX

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 large roles.
OM, UM, CA, MX

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, MX

Northwest Organizer 1930s

This was the newspaper of the Minneapolis Teamsters Union which covered local and national labor issues.
OP

Labor Press in Minnesota

Minnesota's labor issues have been covered in depth by two labor papers, the Minneapolis *Labor Review* and the St. Paul *Union Advocate*.
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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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

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, MX

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, MX

Black History

Bayard Rustin 1912-1987

Rustin was an important Civil Rights leader who is not widely known because of his homosexuality. He helped organize the SCLC and the 1963 March on Washington.

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

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, MX

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, MX

Black Photographers

Black photographers Gordon Parks, James Van der Zee and Moneta Sleet, Jr. documented black life in America at various times in history.

OP, UM, MX

Blockbusting

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, MX

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, MX

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. Radio played an important role in organizing the protest, and TV in bringing it into homes throughout the US.

OP, MN, MX

Freedom Songs in the Civil Rights Movement 1960s

Music played a critical role in inspiring and mobilizing the civil rights movement. Highlander Folk School used them in training civil rights activists. The Freedom Singers were its most famous group.

OP, MN, MX

Harlem Renaissance 1920s

This was an intellectual, social, and artistic movement that took place in Harlem, and was known at the time as the New Negro Movement. Important participants who could be subjects of HD projects include Hubert Harrison, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Zora Neale Hurston. There are also visual artists and the birth of jazz associated with this time period in NY.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

March on Washington 1963

Civil Rights groups organized a march for jobs 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, MX

Marcus Garvey

Garvey founded the United Negro Improvement Association and was a black nationalist and was committed to the Back to Africa movement. He was dedicated to financial independence for Blacks. He had a large following the US and the Caribbean.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R, MX

Martin Luther King and Malcolm X 1960-

Peaceful, nonviolent resistance vs. meeting force with force: Dr. King and Malcolm X communicated very different strategies in the struggle for civil rights.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Role of Black Newspapers in 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, MX

Selma to Montgomery Alabama Marches 1965

These non-violent marches involved attacks by state troopers on the marchers, murder, conflicts between SNCC and SCLC, and finally, protection for the marchers. They were followed in detail by the national media.
OP, UM, J-S, J-H, J-R, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Ghost Dance Movement 1890s

Paiute prophet Wovoka prophesied the Ghost Dance would bring peace and happiness to Native tribes and lead to the end of white American expansion.

OP, UM, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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.MX

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, MX

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, MX

Traveling for Suffrage 1870-1890

Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton joined the lecture circuit and made speeches all over the US. Anthony estimated she made about 75-100 speeches a year.

OP, UM, CA, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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, MX

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 secret surveillance, intimidation, and other extreme tactics in the name of protecting Minnesota's citizens.
OP, UM, CA, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Hmong History

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, MX

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, MX

South Africa

South African Congress of Trade Unions 1955-1985

These trade unions were fundamental to the anti-apartheid struggle.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

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, MX

Steve Biko 1946-1977

An African Nationalist and Socialist, Biko was a prolific writer and organizer who founded The Black Consciousness Movement, and whose death at the hands of the government provoked a global response.
OP, UM, M

Soweto Uprising 1976

An estimated 20,000 students took part in protests against the Apartheid education system, which were met with police brutality, including death.
OP, UM, MX

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, MX

South African Students' Organization 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, MX