



**National History Day 2011**  
***Debate & Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, Consequences***  
**Topic Ideas from the National Archives at Chicago**

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) is the nation's record keeper. We ensure continuing access to essential evidence that documents the rights of the American citizens and the actions of Federal offices. We keep only those federal records that are determined to have continuing value. This includes textual records (such as letters, reports, and memoranda), maps, charts, architectural drawings, and photographs.

BUT

You don't have to go to Washington, D.C. to visit the National Archives. Located in Chicago, Illinois, the Great Lakes Region of the National Archives preserves records dating from 1800 to the 1990s, created by Federal courts and government agencies in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

AND THESE RECORDS CAN HELP WITH YOUR HISTORY DAY SUCCESS

Selecting an interesting and researchable History Day topic will help you start on the path of History Day success. Therefore the staff at the National Archives in Chicago gathered our thoughts and assembled a few topic ideas related to our holdings and this year's National History Day theme: *Debate and Diplomacy in History: Successes, Failures, and Consequences*.

THOUGH "NOT THE END ALL BE ALL"

Our ideas are just a small slice of possibilities. We encourage you to explore the topics below and think about others related to your community. In some instances, we pulled a specific topic out of larger collection of records. Our complete holdings are available online at <http://www.archives.gov/great-lakes/holdings/>

TO ACCESS NATIONAL ARCHIVES AT CHICAGO MATERIALS

Some materials related to the topics we suggested are available online through ARC, our archival research catalog, at <http://www.archives.gov/research/arc/>. For other items, you would need to visit our facility at 7538 South Pulaski Road, Chicago, Illinois. Though before you pay us a visit, we recommend contacting us first at 773-948-9001 or [chicago.archives@nara.gov](mailto:chicago.archives@nara.gov) to save yourself time and ensure we have what you envision (some of our records are stored off-site).

And as always, make sure to review and thoroughly examine the secondary literature (textbooks, books written by other historians, and journal/magazine articles) related to your topic before delving into the primary source material.

Best wishes for a successful National History Day experience!

## SELECT TOPIC IDEAS

- The court case *Dorothy Gautreaux vs. Patricia Harris, Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Chicago Housing Authority* tackled discriminatory practices in twentieth century housing markets. 
- Examine efforts for gender equality in the workplace with innovative, precedent-setting court cases. For example, in *Jo Carol LaFleur vs. Board of Education, Cleveland, Ohio*, mandatory maternity leave for pregnant female teachers was ruled unconstitutional. While in *Thelma Bowe, et al, vs. Colgate Palmolive Company*, hiring rules involving weight-lifting ability, when solely applied to female applicants, was found unconstitutional.
- Did the Chicago Board of Education encourage segregated public schools in the 20<sup>th</sup> century? Investigate court records that document civil rights activities concerning Chicago schools in the 1960s. 
  - Or investigate school desegregation efforts in Benton Harbor Michigan through the civil case of *Barbara Jean Berry vs. School District of the City of Benton Harbor*.
  - Or examine integration of city swimming pools in Evansville, Indiana with *Damon Stewart v. the City of Evansville*.
- Who is ultimately responsible when a large ship sinks? What consequences result in the aftermath? The legal battle and investigation after the sinking of the American freighter, the S.S. Cedarville in 1965 is one example. The Eastland Disaster or the S.S. Bradley accidents can also be considered.
- Examine questions and debates surrounding citizenship by looking at Chinese Exclusion Act case files. 
- What was the relationship between sport figures and team/club owners in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries? What disputes arose? What significant changes have occurred? Consider the 1920s court case involving Chicago Blackhawks player Marvin Wentworth as one example or the 1915 case involving the Federal League of Professional Baseball Clubs and the National and American Leagues of Professional Baseball Clubs. 
- Who owns the land? The Potawatomi tribe and the Miami tribe both brought suits to the court to address land claims. What were the results?
- What disputes arose over ownership of inventions? Consider numerous patent infringement court cases, from ice cream cones to metal letter stencils, to elevator shaft designs.
- Why did American Indians occupy a decommissioned NIKE missile site in the western suburbs of Illinois in the seventies? 

- Did activist leaders incite Vietnam War protestors to riot during the 1968 Democratic Convention? 
- Examine wartime conscientious objectors and activists in the peace movement, such as Bradford Lyttle and David Dellinger. 
- Why was Cabrini Green built? Discover early documents in the War Manpower Commission Records. 
- Conservation, Preservation, Recreation – What is the purpose of national parks? We have records of two National Park sites: Isle Royal National Park, Houghton, MI and Hopewell Culture National Historical Park, Chillicothe, OH.
- Investigate the enforcement of fugitive slave laws with court cases at our facility.
- Examine the history of Cold War NIKE missile sites in city and suburban neighborhoods. 
- Consider Civil Rights activities before 1954 involving public discrimination on the railroads.
- Should that building be saved in the name of historic preservation? One example found in our National Resources Planning Board records is Galena, Illinois.
- What does patriotism mean during World War I? Consider documents from the U.S. Food Administration, Records of the Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement.
- What is the Hindu Conspiracy? Investigate a related court case at our facility. 
- Discover the story of University of Michigan professor, Horace Chandler and the House Subcommittee on Un-American Activities.



= Chicago-area topic