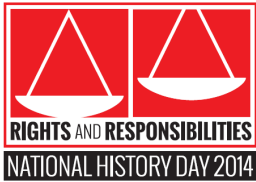


# RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN HISTORY

## Sample Topics & Related Records from the National Archives at New York City



**The Right to Vote:** One of the most important activists in US history, Susan B. Anthony devoted her life to fighting for women's suffrage. Our records include the United States vs. Susan B. Anthony case where the suffragist was charged with illegally registering to vote. The case includes a transcript of testimony given by Susan B. Anthony and others about her action.

**Right to Associate:** During the era of McCarthyism, people that had held Communist values or sympathies were under immense scrutiny for their beliefs. Party leader Eugene Dennis and others were found guilty of violating the Smith Act for following the words of Karl Marx. Musician activist Pete Seeger invoked his right to associate during HUAC hearings and was indicted for contempt of Congress. Our records include court cases involving these and other figures during the 1950s.

**A Right to Privacy:** Does achieving fame mean giving up a private life altogether? Do the 1st amendment rights of freedom of speech and press override another's privacy? Our records include court cases involving recluse writer J.D. Salinger and former first lady Jacqueline Onassis trying to protect their private lives.

**Right of Publicity:** In celebrity culture, one's likeness and appearance can have as much value (or more so) than one's abilities or skills. In Haelan Lab v. Topps, the phrase "right of publicity" was coined in this case involving baseball cards using players' likenesses.

**Patently Obvious Rights:** The US Constitution gives inventors exclusive right to their inventions for a limited time. If this intellectual property right is violated, it is heard in the federal courts. Our court records include patent infringement cases involving such luminaries as Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Charles Goodyear, James Bogardus, and the Wright Brothers.

**Copyright Protection:** Whether one is author, musician, director, or any kind of artist, the creative process is often a difficult one. For that reason, the Constitution protects creators of these works from other people profiting from it improperly. These intellectual property disputes are handled in federal courts. Our court records include copyright infringement cases involving such stars as Charlie Chaplin, Orson Welles, George Harrison, and Andy Warhol and creative works such as Batman, Superman and even "Happy Birthday to You."

**Freedom of the Press:** Enshrined in our 1st amendment, freedom of the press is a cornerstone of our democracy. When it is infringed, our society suffers. When Sports Illustrated journalist Melissa Ludtke was denied entry to the New York Yankees locker room, she used the courts to fight against this injustice.

**A Free Agent:** Curtis C. Flood had a career .293 batting average, won the Golden Glove seven times, and was a part of two World Series teams. More than just those statistics, however, make Curt Flood one of the most important baseball players of the last 50 years. After refusing to be traded to the Phillies, Flood sued Major League Baseball for unfair labor practices. Our records include the Flood v. Kuhn case which eventually led to free agency in baseball.

**Pushing the Envelope:** Though the standard changes with each generation, the debate over obscenity is a constant. In the early 20th century, when Margaret Sanger placed her Woman Rebel pamphlet in the mail, she was indicted for distributing obscene materials. Likewise, when James Joyce's Ulysses was imported into the United States in 1933, Customs seized the novel due to its obscene nature. Later, while performing standup in the 1960s, comedian Lenny Bruce was found guilty of violating local obscenity laws. Through these three cases and others, the struggle between free speech and censorship can be investigated.

**A Right to an Education:** Though the Warren Court overturned segregation "with all deliberate speed," across the nation school districts interpreted the law in different ways. When students and their parents felt the process was still discriminatory, they took to the courts for a solution. In the cases Blocker v. Manhasset Board of Education, Bannister vs. Board of Education of the City of New York, and Taylor v. Board of Education of the City of New Rochelle, the right to a quality education was put to the test.

**Federal Government's Responsibility:** How should the government stimulate the economy? Should there be direct relief to the people? In the depths of the Great Depression, Franklin Roosevelt created a series of programs designed to ensure relief, recovery, and reform. Our records include documents from agencies such as the National Recovery Administration, the National Labor Relations Board, the Civilian Conservation Corps, and the Public Works of Art Project. Our holdings include reports, letters to artists, a CCC newsletter, and descriptions of artwork created throughout the area.

**Responsible for Conservation:** With over 84 million acres in nearly 400 national parks, monuments and memorials throughout the country, the National Park Service preserves the natural and cultural resources of our nation for the enjoyment, education and inspiration of millions. Our records show how parks such as Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty and Morristown National Historic park were preserved and interpreted throughout the 20th century.

**Responsibility During Wartime:** During times of crisis, the government often turns to its citizens to do much more to help their homeland triumph. During the Civil War, for the first time a draft was instituted to build up the military. On the homeland in World War I and World War II, people were asked to conserve food and buy war bonds to defeat our enemies. These stories can be explored through the records of the Provost Marshal General's Bureau, the US Food Administration and the Records of the Treasury respectively.

**Responsibility for Disaster:** After any major disaster, once the dust clears, people start looking for someone to blame. This common reaction was no different after the Titanic struck an iceberg in 1912 and the Lusitania was sunk by a torpedo in 1915. Through limited liability cases held in New York courts, survivors and the families of victims forced the owners of these companies to prove that they were not at fault for these maritime disasters.

These are just a few samples of NHD topics that can be explored at the National Archives at New York City. To find out if there are primary sources about your National History Day topic, contact us today at [newyork.archives@nara.gov](mailto:newyork.archives@nara.gov).