

National History Day 2026

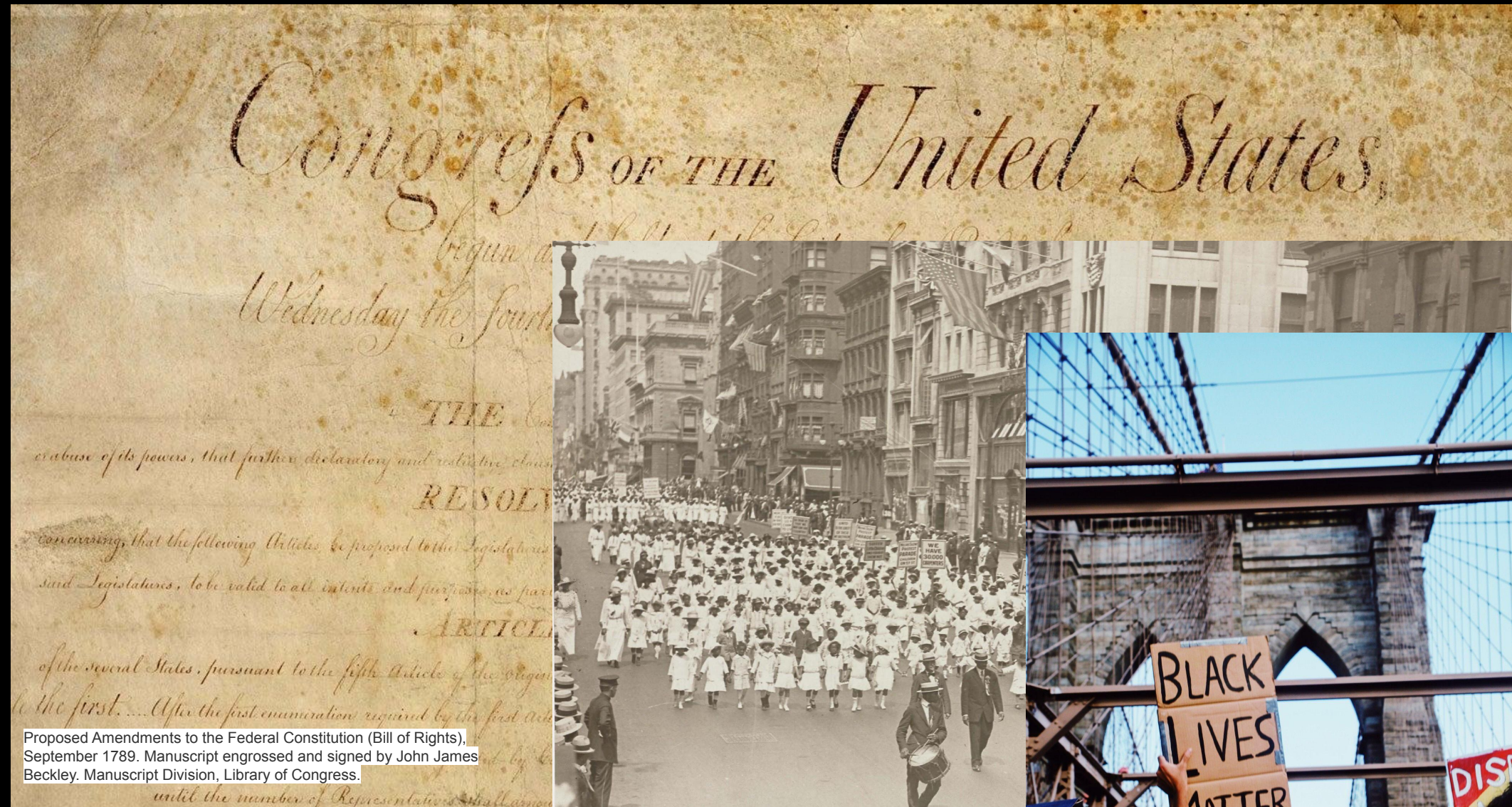
"Revolution, Reaction, and Reform"

in History

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Madison Swart photograph collection,
Brooklyn Public Library,
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National History Day 2026: Revolution

According to National History Day, REVOLUTION refers to:

-“the forcible overthrow of a government or social order, in favor of a new system,”

OR

-“a dramatic and wide-reaching change in the way something works or is organized or in people’s ideas about it.”



Tearing down the statue of George iii, John c. Mcrae (1859)
Engraving
1915.04.001
Fraunces Tavern Museum,
Gift of Mrs. Charles P. Wilbour, 1915

National History Day 2026: Revolution

Revolutions aren't just of governments!

- Revolution in technology
- Revolution in social norms
- Revolution in how space is used
- Revolution in speech
- Revolution in art

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Bob Gore photograph collection, Brooklyn Public Library,
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National History Day 2026: Reform

According to National History Day, Reform refers to:

-“the effort to change to a better state or form; to improve by alteration, substitution, abolition.”



United Neighborhood Houses leaders at their 1936 “Bury the Slums” campaign
Courtesy of United Neighborhood Houses

National History Day 2026: Reform

What constitutes reform?

- Doesn't have to be an ENTIRE reform movement (the settlement house movement), could just be one example (Henry Street Settlement)
- Reform doesn't have to be successful to be historical (or example, gun control, Equal Rights Amendment)



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Brooklyn Daily Eagle photographs,
Brooklyn Public Library,
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National History Day 2026: Reaction

According to National History Day, Reaction refers to:

-“an action performed or a feeling experienced in response to a situation or event; the resistance or opposition to a force or movement”



Steve Pyke, *Missing*, September–November, 2001

National History Day 2026: Reaction

Reactions can come after revolution OR reform; they can also inspire revolution or reform!

- Reactions can be spontaneous and unplanned (uprisings/riots)
- They can be highly organized (Brooklyn CORE stall-in)
- They can be violent (Draft Riots)
- They can be peaceful and/or artistic (Jean-Michel Basquiat responding to police violence)



Defacement (The Death of Michael Stewart), 1983
(Private collection of Nina Clemente)

National History Day 2026: How to Pick a Project

Questions to ask yourself for a project you're excited about:

- What kinds of creators/games/books do I like to find?
- What makes me lock in?
- How has that thing changed over history? How would someone my age interact with that thing 50 years ago? 100? 300?

National History Day 2026: How to Pick a Project

Questions to ask yourself for a project you're excited about:

- Is there a key person or event who everyone thinks of when it comes to that thing?
- Why are they/is it so famous?
- Where can I learn more about this topic?
- What had to happen for me to be exposed to this? Could that represent a revolution? A reform? A reaction?

National History Day 2026: How to Pick a Project

Questions to ask yourself for a project you're excited about:

- When that thing was happening, where were YOUR ancestors? Could it have affected them?
- When that thing was happening, what was YOUR neighborhood like?

National History Day 2026: How to Pick a Project

Questions to ask yourself for a project you're excited about:

- Think about a historical person you'd like to learn more about, then think about their time period. What would they have worn? What food would they have eaten? How did they get around? What music, books, or other things would they have looked to for fun?
- How might any of these factored into their life- do they represent a revolution, reform, or reaction?

National History Day 2026: Tips to Improve Your Project

Tips from a longtime judge:

- They made this theme broad on purpose! Any topic in history probably has **SOME** connection to “revolution,” “reform” and/or “reaction.”
- Use sources you like! Don’t just use them, analyze them. Instead of just showing me a photo, tell me about the photo. How does it answer a **QUESTION** about your topic?



Still from “Freeze Frame Secrets,”
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7JtMeTsQc2A>

National History Day 2026: Tips to Improve Your Project

Tips from a longtime judge:

- Any topic in history probably has **SOME** connection to “revolution,” “reform” and/or “reaction.” Brainstorm a connection!
- Your project should revolve around a **QUESTION**. For example, instead of “The Red Scare: A Reaction to the Cold War,” you could ask, “How does comparing Paul Robeson’s and Charlie Chaplin’s careers show us how race affected reactions to the Red Scare?”



23rd April 1949: American singer, actor, athlete and civil rights activist Paul Robeson (1898 - 1976)
Getty Images

AMERICANS.....
DON'T PATRONIZE REDS!!!!

YOU CAN DRIVE THE REDS OUT OF TELEVISION, RADIO AND HOLLYWOOD.....

THIS TRACT WILL TELL YOU HOW.

WHY WE MUST DRIVE THEM OUT:

1) The REDS have made our Screen, Radio and TV Moscow's most effective Fifth Column in America . . .
2) The REDS of Hollywood and Broadway have always been the chief financial support of Communist propaganda in America . . . 3) OUR OWN FILMS, made by RED Producers, Directors, Writers and STARS, are being used by Moscow in ASIA, Africa, the Balkans and throughout Europe to create hatred of America . . . 4) RIGHT NOW films are being made to craftily glorify MARXISM, UNESCO and ONE-WORLDISM . . . and via your TV Set they are being piped into your Living Room—and are poisoning the minds of your children under your very eyes!!!

So REMEMBER — If you patronize a Film made by RED Producers, Writers, Stars and STUDIOS you are aiding and abetting COMMUNISM . . . every time you permit REDS to come into your Living Room VIA YOUR TV SET you are helping MOSCOW and the INTERNATIONALISTS to destroy America!!!



Typical U.S. anticommunist literature of the 1950s, specifically addressing the entertainment industry
Courtesy Wikimedia Commons

Still from *The Gold Rush*
U.S., 1925

Written and directed by Charles Chaplin

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SECOND ANNUAL!! Special 400th Anniversary Prize for New York City History!

- **The Center for Brooklyn History will be awarding a special prize this year for projects centering New York City history**
- **Last year's prizes went to projects on the 1964 School Boycott, and free speech on Broadway. Want to be next year's winner?**



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New York City history topics to consider:

Revolution

- New York City during the Revolutionary War
- Shipping containerization
- Subways come to New York
- Jazz and the Harlem Renaissance
- Digital banking comes to Wall Street
- Air conditioning

Reaction

- 1977 Blackout and Hip Hop
- Crown Heights Uprising
- The original Penn Station and the creation of the Landmarks Preservation Commission
- Columbia 1968 student uprising
- Hard Hat Riot

Reform

- Progressive Movement
- Jacob Riis and “How the Other Half Lives”
- Bed-Stuy Restoration Development Corporation
- Antonia Pantoja and bilingual education
- Chinatown benevolent associations
- Central Park anti-nuclear war protest

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CBH is here to help!

- **Make a research appointment with us at the Center for Brooklyn History: cbhreference@bklynlibrary.org**
- **Browse our online exhibitions and resource packets:
<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/cbh/projects/online-projects>**



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