

**CALL FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO**

**TEACHING LABOR’S STORY**

**Purpose and Goals**: “Teaching Labor’s Story” is part of LAWCHA’s Teacher/Public Sector Initiative. Together these projects are designed to further LAWCHA’s mission to “promote public and scholarly awareness of labor and working-class history” and its commitment to “teaching labor history in the classroom, from K12 to colleges and universities.”

“Teaching Labor’s Story” is designed to address a clear and pressing educational gap. This gap is the product of many factors, one of which is the ways in which labor’s story is told, untold, and distorted in the standard textbooks used in high schools and universities across the country.

As noted in the introduction to *American Labor and U.S. History Textbooks,*

In the high school history textbooks our children read, too often we find that labor’s role in American history— and labor’s important accomplishments, which changed American life forever—are misrepresented, downplayed or ignored. [[1]](#footnote-1)

In a study of college textbooks, published in *Labor History*, historian Robert Shaeffer finds,

…the absence in virtually all survey textbooks, as well as in textbooks of the recent (post-1945) U.S., of any mention of the upsurge in public employee unionism in the 1960s and 1970s. This silence … reflects a lack of perspective about what has been one of the most important legacies of the 1960s to contemporary life. [[2]](#footnote-2)

“Teaching Labor’s Story” [TLS] seeks to redress these problems in historical memory and understanding by developing and disseminating resources that will enable educators to re-infuse labor’s story into the historical narrative. The TLS approach is to meet teachers where they are, which means providing resources that can be readily incorporated by experts and non-experts alike into existing curriculum.

**LAWCHA invites labor historians to contribute to “Teaching Labor’s Story,”** a peer-reviewed, crowd-sourcing project that will publish annotated primary sources and source sets selected and organized for seamless incorporation into existing history and social studies curriculum - middle and high school, college and university, and beyond. Our goal is to provide resources that will foster discussion and deepen understanding of labor, workers and their organizations as central characters in the historical narrative.

**Who can contribute?**

* LAWCHA members
* Faculty, independent scholars, teachers &/or graduate students recommended by a LAWCHA member
* Undergraduate students under the mentorship of a LAWCHA member

More Information: lawcha.tls@gmail.com

**What is an “Annotated Primary Source”?**

1. Primary Source: Carefully selected source document (textual, visual, aural, material culture) that reveals a historically and pedagogically meaningful perspective on a core historical question or issue. Recommended Maximum Length: 1,000 words, edited.
2. Sourcing the Source: Identify the author/creator; date created; type of source (eg: speech, private letter, photograph, oral interview); intended audience
3. Understanding the Source: Contextualizing annotation written in narrative form in two sub-sections. Recommended Length: 1,000 words.

[i] Historical Context - brief description of the primary source’s subject and content; explanation of the context in which the document was created, including but not limited to the author/creator and intended/ unintended audiences to the extent these are relevant to the document’s historical meaning;

[ii] Meaning and Significance of the primary source - particularly as it is related to core historical questions or issues; including an explanation of where this source and its subject fits into the arc of a standard curriculum.

1. Glossary: List and provide brief historically-grounded explanation of terms, concepts, people, organizations or groups that figure into the source content, but may not be common knowledge for teachers and/or their students (eg: AFL; semi-skilled; craft union)
2. Questions &/or Discussion Points: Recommended questions designed to prompt understanding and deep analysis of the source in three sub-sections. Recommended: 2-5 questions in each area.

[i] Source-Specific: questions related to the primary source’s particular content and meanings

[ii] Historical Era: questions that draw the primary source into development of deeper and/or broader understandings of the historical era;

[iii] Labor and Working Class History: questions that elicit consideration and understanding of essential questions or issues in labor and of working class history.

1. Citation & Fair Use: Bibliographic Citation for the primary source, including indication of fair use status for copyright purposes and the name of the source editor [you], if edited from the original.
2. Additional Sources: List of 3-6 recommended secondary sources for further information, including full citation for each. Recommended: readily accessible to teachers; non-textual as well as textual sources; very brief annotations preferred.

**What is a “Teaching Labor’s Story” Primary Source Set?**

* Primary Source Sets are a cluster of 2-10 Individual annotated primary sources
* Primary Source Sets are curated to ensure that the combination of sources in the set are historically and pedagogically meaningful and usable as a set.

**How can I participate in this project?**

* Check out the TLS samples and template [soon-to-be] posted at LAWCHA.org - Teaching Resources
* Let us know that you’re interested in writing for Teaching Labor’s Story (including the primary source you’d like to annotate, if known). Contact Nikki Mandell, Teacher/Public Sector Initiative committee at: lawcha.tls@gmail.com
1. Albert Shanker Institute, *American Labor and U.S. History Textbooks: How Labor's Story Is Distorted In High School Textbooks* ***(***commissioned by the Shanker Institute in cooperation with the American Labor Studies Center. c. 2011); <http://www.shankerinstitute.org/sites/shanker/files/american-labor.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Robert Shaffer, “Where Are The Organized Public Employees? The Absence Of Public Employee Unionism From U.S. History Textbooks, And Why It Matters,” *Labor History* 43:3 (2002): 315. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)