



WEST SIDE

INTRODUCTION

The history of Mexican Americans in St. Paul's West Side neighborhood reveals a community shaped by resilience, grassroots activism and strong local institutions. The determination of residents, the energy of the Chicano Movement, and the support of community organizations like Our Lady of Guadalupe church helped West Siders survive displacement and forge a thriving community.

More about the series

You Are Here is a tour through Twin Cities place and time. The premiere episode of the new nostalgia anthology series from the makers of *Lost Twin Cities* reveals the raucous, rowdy early history of Minnehaha Park area, the inspiring story of Bdote – a sacred birthing Island, and St Paul's West Side, the historic heartbeat of Minnesota's Latine community.

How to use this guide

This guide includes discussion questions you can use as written or adapt for viewers, plus additional resources at the end to support deeper conversation.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Essential Question

1. How can a place reveal stories of the past, the environment, and the people?

Supporting Questions

1. Why are stories tied to specific places important for understanding history?
2. How does understanding a place's history help create community, respect, and foster cultural understanding?

Before watching consider following questions to activate conversation

1. What is a place that has significant value to you? Why is it so important to you?
2. Look at a map of St. Paul and find the West Side. Based on its location near the Mississippi River and downtown, what opportunities and challenges might people living there have experienced?
 - a. <https://saintpaulhistorical.com/tours/show/35>
 - b. [West Side - Google Maps](#)

While watching consider the following questions

1. Who were the communities living on St. Paul's West Side, and how did they help shape the neighborhood's identity?
2. Why were communities being displaced from the West Side? What was the reason behind the displacement? What justification did the city provide for this dislocation?
 - a. Why is the West Side's proximity to the Mississippi River significant?
3. Who is Sister Giovanni? Why is she a significant figure in the West Side?
4. Who is Gilbert De La O? Why is he a significant figure in the West Side?
5. What are murals? What do the murals communicate about identity, history, and community pride?
6. What is the Chicano Movement? What was happening in the West Side during this time? How did the community respond to the displacement from the West Side?

After watching consider the following questions to engage in conversation

1. If you were to create a mural representing your history, community, neighborhood, and culture, where would it be and what would it be of?



2. How can displacement affect families, a neighborhood's identity, traditions, and sense of belonging?
3. What is something that connected the most with you and why after watching?
4. What new insights or perspectives did you gain about the relationship between history, place, and community after watching?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Research project: Explore Local History

In this activity, choose a local street or place to explore. Research the topics below, then create a presentation using visuals, maps, and video clips to support your ideas.

1. History: What is the historical background of the place? When was it established, and what significant events have occurred there?
2. Origins: What are the origins of the name? Does it reflect any particular significance or cultural background?
3. Notable Individuals: Are there any important figures associated with this place? What contributions did they make to the community or area?
4. Communities: What communities or groups of people have lived or gathered in this area over time? How have they shaped the place's identity?

Creative project: Create Your Own Mural

In this activity, explore the history and importance of murals, then create your own mural design.

- Research
 - Read [Muralismo in St. Paul | MNopedia](#).
 - Listen to the podcast, [Museum of the Streets: Muralismo in St. Paul](#) from the Minnesota Historical Society podcast *Minnesota Unraveled*. It features Ralph Brown, co-founder of the West Side Community Organization and Chicano artist Jimmy Longoria.
- Reflect
 - Consider the various representations of murals discussed in the articles. What messages did they convey, and what might be their impact on viewers and the community?
 - Explore the images of murals presented in the reading; choose one that stands out to you. Write a few sentences about why that mural resonates with you.
- Create
 - What does your mural represent? Think about the themes or messages you want to convey.
 - What colors will you use to express your ideas? Think about the emotions and meanings associated with different colors.
 - Where do you imagine this mural being placed in your community and why? Consider how its location is important to its message.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Deepen the conversation by incorporating this video with activities, related books, resources, other engaging videos, exploring local restaurants, and visiting cultural heritage and history centers.

- Learn more about the West Side
 - Read [West Side Flats | MNopedia](#) for a deeper history of the West Side.
 - Watch the segment [West Side Flats | Twin Cities PBS](#)
 - Explore the work and advocacy efforts of the [West Side Community Organization](#)