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Cold Millions and the Free Speech Fight: A Student-Curated Exhibit at Central Library

Transport yourself into Jess Walter's bestselling novel, *The Cold Millions*, led by Eastern Washington University history students and Jess Walter at an upcoming event on **Tuesday, February 10 at 4pm at Central Library**. This event kicks off a **months-long exhibit** (February 10 - March 31) on the third floor of Central Library featuring research related to *The Cold Millions*.

Students from the Eastern Washington University history department, in conversation with Walter, will discuss researching the novel's historical roots (such as the Free Speech Fight of 1909 - 1910) and their curation of the exhibit.

"The exhibit explores the myths and realities of Spokane at the turn of the last century," said EWU History Professor Larry Cebula. "A time when millionaires lived in elaborate mansions, workers scrambled to survive, and a fearless band of union organizers fought for justice."

Some of the historic artifacts on display from that time period include handcuffs and a leather flog used to punish inmates (on loan from the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture), a songbook that unified Industrial Workers of the World during the Free Speech Fight, and a depiction of the size of a jail cell that would hold as many as 28 people.

The subject matter is also timely. As author Jess Walter said, "Given what's happening across the country, it's an especially apt time to look back at the Spokane Free Speech Fight, sometimes described as the first 'successful' nonviolent protest in American history, and a fascinating time to think about the role and efficacy of protest, and the lengths the powerful will go to subvert it."

The students at Eastern Washington University demonstrate how beautifully a well-written work of literature can unite us, educate us, and inspire us. Visit Spokane Public Library between February 10 and March 31 to celebrate the efforts of the students who built the exhibit and the timely work of author Jess Walter.

About Spokane Public Library

Spokane Public Library aims to inspire a thriving city through cultural and educational opportunities. An award-winning library that spans seven locations and houses nearly half-a million items, Spokane Public Library circulates nearly two million items and welcomes one million visitors annually. Customers can enjoy traditional library media and can also access digital downloads, databases, historical collections, art exhibits and interesting free programming. For general information about the library, please visit spokanelibrary.org or call 509.444.5300. [Access our media kit here!](#)