

The East Side Freedom Library and the Ramsey County Historical Society invite you to a special Armistice Day/Veterans Day program



DEMOCRACY ON HOLD: MINNESOTA DURING THE GREAT WAR

a presentation by Greg Gaut

**Wednesday, November 11, 2020
at 7:00PM**

After registering ([register here](#)), you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. The presentation will be recorded. Please note that registration emails will be shared to Ramsey County Historical Society and the East Side Freedom Library. If you do not wish to share your email, contact events@rchs.com.

When thousands of Minnesotans went to Europe to “make the world safe for democracy” in WW I, the legislature created the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety to govern the state for the duration of the war. Led by John McGee, a conservative lawyer, it crushed any form of dissent, labor organizing, or German cultural expression. McGee organized the Home Guard as the commission’s main enforcement arm. Composed of volunteers primarily from the business community, Home Guard units helped defeat a Twin Cities transit workers strike, conducted mass arrests of young men to check draft status (“slacker raids”), and physically harassed the campaign of Charles Lindbergh, Sr, the Nonpartisan League’s candidate for governor in 1918. Minnesota’s home front experience reminds us how easily “America first” patriotism can evolve into a dangerous, intolerant nationalism, how fragile civil liberties and the rule of law are in periods of great polarization, and how tempting it can be for politicians to stir up hostility toward immigrants.

Greg Gaut is emeritus faculty at Saint Mary’s University in Winona, where he taught European and Russian history. Since 2012, he has worked as a historic preservation consultant, preparing National Register of Historic Places nominations for buildings across the state from Worthington to Ely. With his wife Marsha Neff, he has contributed several articles to *Minnesota History*, two of which won the Minnesota Society of Architectural Historians award for the best article on Minnesota’s built environment. A lover of libraries, he has published *Laird’s Legacy: A History of the Winona Public Library* and *Reinventing the People’s Library*, a history of the Arlington Hills Public Library, now the East Side Freedom Library. He is working on a book about the Minnesota home front during World War I.

Free and open to all
info@eastsidefreedomlibrary.org and 651-207-4926

