

### **Key Themes**

As highly trusted institutions, museums can dedicate space to social justice exhibits and facilitate dialogue around difficult subjects. There are two types of social justice that museums should consider when designing exhibits:

**Distributive Justice** – Seeking to equally distribute the risks and rewards in society. For example, black men are at a higher risk of arrest and incarceration than any other group in the United States.

**Retributive Justice** – Seeking to redress past wrongs. For example, addressing the historical wrong and contemporary consequences of slavery in the United States.

Museums have a responsibility to serve all audiences, regardless of background, and must do so to be sustainable.

Elena Gonzales gives examples of four key mechanisms for museums to employ in social justice exhibits: empathy, memory, action, and institutional context. For example, she discusses how tour guides can be trained to build empathy between themselves and the audience to create meaningful engagement with the topic.

### **Examples**

[Prisons Today](#) at Eastern State Penitentiary explores the modern prison industrial complex.

[The African Presence in México: From Yanga to the Present](#) at the National Museum of Mexican Art in Chicago explores the under-told history of Africans living in Mexico.

The Holocaust and Human Rights Museum in Dallas has a [permanent exhibition on human rights and genocide](#).

### **Resources**

[The Inluseum](#) is dedicated to promoting collaboration and inclusion in museums.

[Museum Archipelago](#) is a podcast that explores how museums have confronted difficult topics in their institutions.

Visit Elena Gonzales' [website](#), check out her [book](#), or send her an [email](#).

### **Helpful Tips**

[Empathy](#) is crucial in exhibits on social justice. Visitors need to feel a connection with others and the topic, so that they take what they learn into the world.

Providing visitors with a tangible take-away, like a postcard or craft, can maintain post-visit engagement.

Create an environment that makes visitors feel welcome, respected, and included, such as a gender-neutral bathroom, LGBTQ+ pride sticker, and [social stories](#).

Collaborate and share authority with [local social justice groups](#) to ensure the content of the exhibit matches community needs.