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Illinois State Museum to Host Social Justice in Museums Series

Thought leaders discuss how museums can cultivate cultural change and healing

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. – The Illinois State Museum (ISM) will host four virtual-panel discussions as part of its “Social Justice in Museums Series” during October and November.

The series aims to allow the public to look closely at what is happening in American museums today, especially in light of recent protests and violence.

Illinois State Museum Director Cinnamon Catlin-Legutko will moderate each panel, engaging with thought leaders to discuss museums and their intersections with social justice and activism, community development, and decolonization.

“As leaders in the museum field, we must commit ourselves to engage in inclusive practices that include empathy, acknowledgment of historical and present injustices, and promote healing,” said Catlin-Legutko. “We have so much work to do, and we are excited to share with the community what museums are achieving and what is to come.”

Panels for the “Social Justice in Museums Series” include:

PANEL 1 | The Inclusive Museum | Thursday, October 8 at 6:00 p.m. Central

Diversity, Equity, Accessibility, and Inclusion (DEAI) is the work of many American museums today. However, a few years ago, few major museums were conscious of the need to be inclusive. Simultaneously, workers have pushed for change and a recognition of how museums perpetuate racist practices when unchecked. Who needs to part of this change in museums? Each of us has a role in becoming anti-racist in our lives and museum spaces.

Panelists:

- Ben Garcia, *Deputy Executive Director and Chief Learning Officer at the Ohio History Connection, Columbus, OH*
- Ashley Rogers, *Executive Director at the Whitney Plantation, Edgard, LA*
- Noelle Trent, *Director of Interpretation, Collections, and Education at the National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis, TN*

PANEL 2 | Museums are Not Neutral | Thursday, October 22 at 6:00 p.m. Central

Over the past five years, the museum field has witnessed a reckoning. Movements for change have been born and sustained – Decolonize the Museum, #MuseumsRespondToFerguson, Museum Workers Unite, MASS Action, to name a few. The Museums are Not Neutral movement sparks conversation and thinking and challenges us to question why museums are perceived as neutral though they have never been.

Panelists:

- LaTanya Autry, *Cultural Organizer, Curator, and Art Historian*
- Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, *Head of Public Programs at the Smithsonian American Art Museum, Washington, D.C.*
- Elisabeth Callihan, *Head of Multi-Generational Learning at Minneapolis Institute of Arts*

PANEL 3 | Decolonizing Museum Practices | Thursday, November 5 at 6:00 p.m. Central

Often built on the bodies and belongings of oppressed people and communities, the museum is a colonial enterprise designed to keep what is essential and precious for society-at-large. Modern museums exist using these frameworks, and despite legislation, there is more work to do to begin reconciliation and healing.

Panelists:

- Andrea Carlson, *Visual Artist, Chicago, IL*
- Brandie MacDonald, *Director of Decolonizing Initiatives at Museum of Us, San Diego, CA*
- Debra Yepa-Pappan, *Native Community Engagement Coordinator at the Field Museum, Chicago, IL*

PANEL 4 | Museums and Community Engagement | Thursday, November 19 at 6:00 p.m. Central

The 21st-century museum is a reflection of the communities around it and whom it serves. How we connect and build bridges must also consider the absence and erasure of historically excluded communities. Museums are increasingly employing numerous strategies for the engagement of previously underserved or marginalized audiences. Experts will discuss insights and practical ideas for sustainable engagement programs.

Panelists:

- Melanie Adams, *Director at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum, Washington, D.C.*
- Dina Bailey, *Chief Executive Officer of Mountain Top Vision*
- Donna Sack, *Vice President and Chief Program Officer at the Naper Settlement, Naperville, IL*

For registration information, visit www.illinoisstatemuseum.org/content/upcoming-events.

About the Illinois State Museum

Established in 1877, the Illinois State Museum is a dynamic institution that inspires the exploration of Illinois' past and present to inform and enrich everyday life and promote stewardship of cultural and natural resources. Headquartered in Springfield with branch facilities in Lewistown and Lockport, ISM is accredited by the American Alliance of Museums and a proud member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience.