

Workers, students, musicians endorse demonstration in defense of the Detroit Institute of Arts

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Support is building for the October 4 demonstration called by the Socialist Equality Party and International Youth and Students for Social Equality to oppose the sale of artworks from the Detroit Institute of Arts as part of the city's bankruptcy plan.

Over the past several days, students, workers and musicians have sent in endorsements for the demonstration, adding their voices to those opposed to the looting of the DIA to pay off the city's wealthy creditors. (For more information and to endorse the campaign, visit defendthedia.org)

Among those endorsing the demonstration were a number of local musicians, including members of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and the Michigan Opera Theatre orchestra.

Hart Hollman, violist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra

"It is absurd to think that they are threatening to sell the art at the DIA. Nobody has the right to sell art like that. This art was donated for the good of the people, not to pay off someone's debts. It is an outrage.

"There are irreplaceable pieces—the Egyptian exhibit, the paintings from Flemish to the Renaissance. A lot of these paintings are in the art history books. It is so precious for museums to have that. It is one of the finest museums in the country. The art is irreplaceable.

"The whole history of art parallels and intertwines with that of music. Everyone in the Detroit Symphony supports the museum.

"I have been involved in the arts all my life. My parents always took me to all the major art museums. I attended Baum art school in Allentown Pennsylvania. I studied with William Benson, a well-known contemporary artist. I am

photographer. I go to the art museum and photograph the masters' paintings; look at their use of color. My inspiration comes from art museums. That is why the museum is so important to me. It is a big part of my life, not just music. It is an inspiration. You could probably talk to thousands of people with the same idea."

Greg Near, trombonist with the Michigan Opera Theatre

"As a musician working in Detroit, I have always looked upon this city as an environment where the arts and industrial innovation worked hand in hand to achieve greatness. The music of Detroit became affectionately known as Motown. In better times the city recognized the importance that arts organizations would have on the making of a successful city, and we had/have the best: The Detroit Symphony, Motown, The Detroit Institute of Arts, and Michigan Opera Theatre (where I have played in the orchestra for 35 years).

"Through no fault of the hard working men and women in this area we now face the possibility that through bankruptcy we could lose substantial works of art collected by the Detroit Institute of Arts. These works of art belong to the world and were entrusted to this fine institution for safekeeping. Please do not let the interests of a few rob us of these treasures! The Diego Rivera murals, paintings by Van Gogh, Rembrandt, and Matisse... the list is long. They must not end up in private collections, lost to the world."

James, building maintenance worker from Detroit

"There's no way it should be allowed [to sell the art]. I

live in this city and I love that museum, but this will affect the whole region. The art is educational, especially for school kids. Where else can they go to see great works of art from all over the world, from throughout history?"

Helena, political science major at Michigan State University and a graduate of the Detroit School of the Arts

Helena has been playing violin for 8 years. She intends to distribute leaflets for the October 4 demonstration on her campus.

"Art is about education, and exposure to culture. Seeing art encourages kids to express themselves and create positive things. It lets them connect with history. The art at the DIA isn't just a bunch of pictures with no context, there's always a history, always a story involved as to why these particular images were painted."

Davell, unemployed worker living in Detroit

"I don't believe in coincidences. It's no coincidence that the Nazis also stole art from the people they were trying to conquer during World War Two. Art is an expression of creativity; it shows us who we really are. Diego Rivera was an amazing artist. His murals—when I used to go to the DIA with my middle school—they always fascinated me. There is so much of real life depicted in them.

"If you take away the museum, it will take away the inspiration to create. I think [the attack on the DIA] goes hand in hand with the 'redevelopment' project downtown, which is really gentrification. I live downtown, and I'm struggling at the moment because a company bought my apartment building and raised the rent on me."

Trent Novak, lab assistant in Columbia, Maryland

"I just finished watching the video for this campaign, and am writing to express my support for the efforts of Detroit workers.

"The video—with appearances by Naomi Spencer, David Walsh, and Lawrence Porter—stands as a testament to the

seriousness and humanity of the SEP's political work.

"Recent articles on the WSWS have clarified the magnitude and political importance of the prospective sale of this artwork, not only for the immediate residents of Detroit and its surroundings, but for the entire globe. The web site has situated the potential looting of the DIA within history, noting how the museum was founded a few decades after the Civil War, during a period when the American industrial elite sought to build and promote public cultural institutions as an expression of their own largesse.

"But now, in the present, the wealth of the ruling class is rooted in shredding and dismantling everything that can be grasped and gobbled up.

"The history of Detroit is intimately bound up with the history of manufacturing in the United States. A city which flourished during the great heights of American production in the early and mid-20th century, it is now in the process of being hollowed out and destroyed. That is, if the ruling elites have their way.

"Politics in Detroit must be understood as a microcosm of class relations in the United States. The forced bankruptcy of the city, the contempt for workers' pension agreements, and the Obama administration's refusal to offer any aid whatsoever all indicate what capitalism and its representatives in government have to offer the population: nothing but devastation.

"It is imperative that the working class take matters into its own hands. While the unions claim that the DIA should be sacrificed in exchange for protecting the wages and benefits of workers, the Socialist Equality Party insists that these are not separate or opposed issues. The idea that anything at all must be sacrificed in order to continue funneling money to the banks and the wealthy must be forcefully rejected.

"Workers have to be uncompromising in defense of their interests. The DIA is an important place to make a stand, and the Socialist Equality Party is the only organization determinedly pointing the way forward."

Send in your endorsement today! Visit defendthedia.org



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact