

Worldwide support for campaign to defend DIA

27 September 2013

The campaign by the Socialist Equality Party (SEP) and the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts is winning worldwide support.

Over the past several days, workers, retirees, artists and musicians have sent in endorsements for the October 4 demonstration, called by the SEP and IYSSE, to oppose the sale of DIA masterpieces to pay off the city's wealthy creditors. (For more information and to endorse the campaign, visit defendthedia.org)

Endorsements have come from many different parts of the world, including Spain, Britain, the Czech Republic and Australia. Workers across the United States have also given their support. The following is a selection of the endorsements we have received.

Karol, University of Valencia, Spain

"Exploring the DIA was one of the highlights of my visit to Detroit last year. Coming from Spain, I knew that this was a world-famous institution, but I was deeply impressed by the breadth and beauty of its collection. Works of art from ancient societies—Greek, Roman, Etruscan, Mesopotamian, Egyptian, Islamic, African and Asian—give the visitor a glimpse into the past and are a powerful lesson on the history of civilization. The DIA's extensive collection of European art, including paintings by the Old Masters, the Impressionists and Expressionists, rivals those of European museums. I was moved by the impressive collection of American art, a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the United States. The most inspirational piece of work in the DIA was, for me, the Detroit Industry murals by the Mexican artist Diego Rivera. Rich in symbolism, representing the development of humanity and its relation to nature, these frescoes are also a tribute to Detroit's workers.

"Now the rights of these workers are under attack. I was shocked when I learned of the plans to sell the art in the DIA in order to pay off the Wall Street investors. Access to art and culture is a social right. If these sales are allowed to proceed, future generations will be deprived of the enriching experience that is a visit to the DIA. These barbaric measures must be stopped. I fully endorse the campaign to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts, one of the treasures of this great city."

Joe Striplin, violinist, Detroit Symphony Orchestra

"I encourage all members of the community to support the demonstration organized by the Socialist Equality Party to defend the Detroit Institute of Arts. I believe in and support this demonstration and encourage others to follow this example.

"I believe that public ownership of important pieces of art is vital. Art should be accessible to any and everyone and not locked up in private collections. The Diego Rivera mural needs to be there. Our society is enriched when our citizens are involved with the arts, whether, painting, sculpture, music or dance.

"I have heard some people say that preserving art treasures is not important compared to pensions. They are not mutually exclusive. The idea of feeding people is not separate from defending the artwork in the struggle for a just society. Money is needed to live, no doubt. But art should not be considered a toss-away. Art makes life worth living. Those interested in defending art are also concerned with economic well being. We need both."

Mark J. Lovas, English teacher, Czech Republic

"I once visited the DIA, and was amazed—both by the depth and beauty of its collections, and by the incongruity of its location in the heart of an abandoned city. Even though I knew of the existence of Diego Rivera's murals, to be in their presence was for me a pleasure of a new sort. Converting the museum from a public good to a piece of private property would be a supreme act of barbarism, vandalism, hooliganism—but, regrettably only the latest in a long list of crimes against the people of Detroit."

Garrett Derner, school watchman, Evanston, Illinois

"The DIA is a cultural treasure for working people; keep it intact! Diego Rivera ended up basically donating his time. His work is a gift to us, which we must keep!"

Adrian Lewis, musician, Australia/[comment]

"Greetings to the demonstration in defense of the Detroit Institute of Arts!"

“Like all the scientific and artistic conquests of humanity, this institution and its contents belong by right to the people. This right was established over almost a century by the great social struggles of workers, conscious of the indispensable place of the DIA in their lives.

“Now the capitalist barbarians, all of whose riches derive from theft and plunder, and who as a class have not contributed one iota to science and art, are asserting the right to privatize the treasures of the DIA. They are using their political parties and law courts to this end, so no appeal to those parties and legal system can stop them. Their system is bankrupt, and they have no other methods to further enrich themselves than through naked theft and plunder.

“Workers and youth attending and supporting this historic demonstration must make it the spearhead of the fight to wrest Detroit from the bankers, to inspire and arouse working people around the country and the world.

“Long live the peoples’ DIA!

“Defend all the social and cultural conquests of the working class!”

Lynn Whitford, artist, Madison, Wisconsin

“I am appalled that selling art from the collection of the DIA is under consideration! This art belongs to the people of Detroit and must be preserved for their benefit and that of future residents of the city.”

Ernest Medeiros, Forestville, California

“When I was a boy in 1950s Boston, my life was hugely enriched by the wonderful museums in that city. From the Museum of Fine Art, to the Museum of Science, to the wonderful collections at various smaller venues throughout the area, I was blessed, and my life made infinitely better by my exposure to the world of art and science through our museums. I came from a humble, working class family, and *none* of these wonderful things would have been accessible to me if not for a social environment that put education and exposure to high culture *for all* as a high priority. It is crucial that we recognize the uncountable value of institutions like the Detroit Institute of Arts. We debase ourselves as a people and demean the populace as a whole when we put a price tag on culture.”

Kevin Harrison, sculptor, London, England

“These works of art should not be sold to the highest bidding private mega-rich collector. They are all of ours.”

John Christian, retired, Sydney, Australia

“I would like to support the struggle to defend the cultural conquest of the DIA by workers and professionals. This is an international issue of the greatest importance to workers everywhere. For there is a great principle under attack—the right and access to culture and education for workers. Moreover, genuine art and culture are products of social men and women sharing ideas and thoughts about the deeper understanding of life, using imagery.

“Workers have to start taking stock of events.; the last 25 years have seen the gluttons and vandals (the capitalists) plunder society and accumulate incalculable wealth, using swindling phrases and techniques, now poised to plunder the assets of Detroit.

“Big money in every major city in the US and some of the world are watching intensely, how this scam will pan out, for it is not just about Detroit. If anything, Detroit is the first of many cities. Integral too, is to end and plunder pensions and retiree health care: Along with looting the wonderful artworks acquired globally through struggle over many decades...

“As a retired worker in Australia, a great wish of mine is to see the powerful American working class come off the sidelines into battle, fighting for a society fit for human beings—social equality, social justice, culture and workers power—in other words, socialism.”

Kathryn, Manchester, Great Britain

“In Detroit, your campaign is indeed at the forefront, and not a moment too soon.

“The same social forces in Britain—corporate gangsters, trade union and political mafia (particularly odious in Britain, the Labourites at the municipal level)—have been looting publicly-owned art treasures for years.

“The only difference: the municipal authorities in Britain—overwhelmingly Labourite and their bagmen and women in the trade union bureaucracy—haven’t needed and don’t need any special measures, legal or otherwise, to plunder art treasures in the service of the financial elite.

“Likewise, they are engaged in the destruction of the lives of millions of workers and youth—jobs, wages, essential social and welfare services, education—as they ‘administer’ the most authoritarian and punitive measures against the poor.”



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